木尾士目

Kio Shimoku

五年生

"The 5th Grade"

Soma Yoshino & Shima Akia The Story is close to you

1

Parents, Friends, Future, Their Relationship……
They haven't reached the conclusion about them
It's a pitiful and distressed youth.

アフタヌーンKC

五年生
The 5th Grade
1
木尾士目

Chapter 1	*Are You Happy?*
Chapter 2	*And So I Quit College*
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	Embarrassing Afterword

五年生

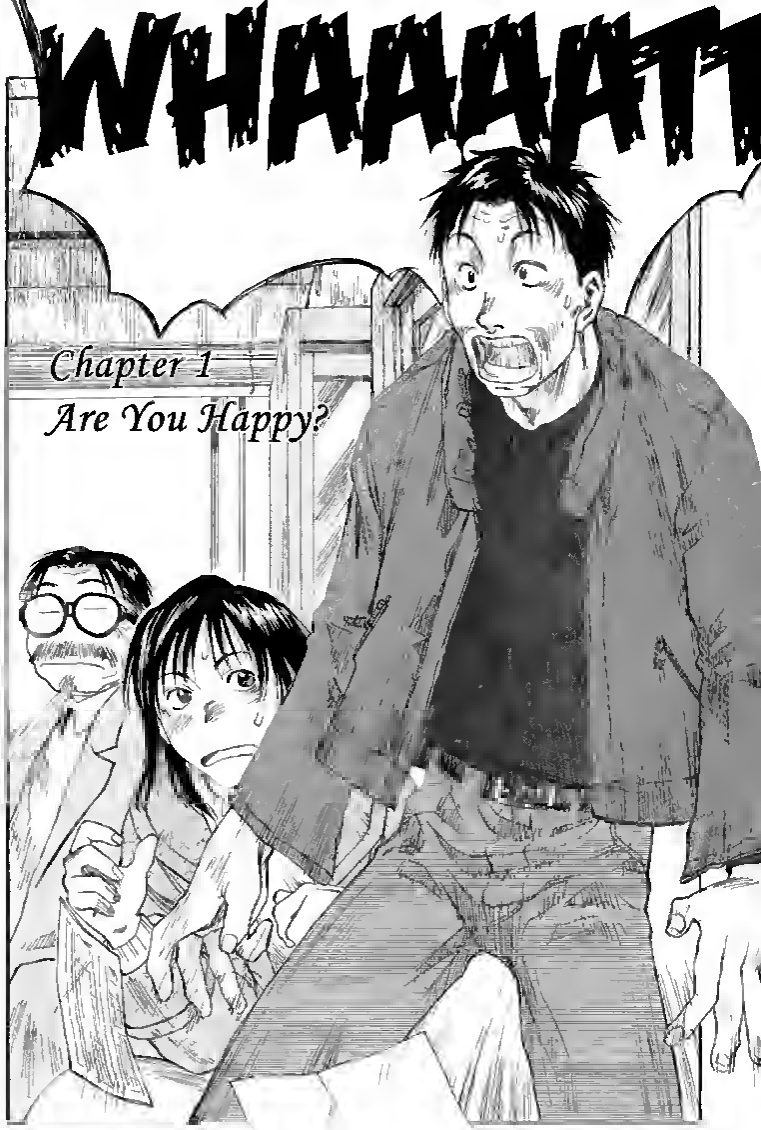
"The 5th Grade"

Soma Yoshino & Shima Akio. The Story is close to you

1

Kio Shimoku

THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT, YOU DUMMY!
Seminar: Passed
P: Passed
F:
Total
32
134.0
JUST JUST HAND IT OVER AND LET ME READ IT HERE!
HUH? NO, LOOK. I ONLY NEED A HUNDRED THIRTY-TWO CREDIT HOURS, RIGHT?
LOOK, RIGHT THERE, A HUNDRED THIRTY-FOUR!
.....
.....
guages (required)
ocessing (required)
nt (ele
(free
HUH ?
66.0
28.0
12.0
8.0
4.
6.
6.
4.0
134.0
YOU'RE MISSING TWO CREDITS HERE!
LOOK! YOUR REQUIRED ELECTIVE!
OH MY GOD, YOU IDIOT!
WHA...


WHAAAAT!
Chapter 1
Are You Happy?

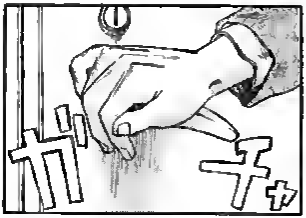
Sssss
3 days ago...
This is what I said.
Y'KNOW, I'M HAPPY.

MMM
OKAY HERE'S ALL THE BOOKS I BORROWED FROM YOU
NOT GONNA SAY ANY-THING ABOUT ME?
LOOK AT ME!
NOTHING IN MY HANDS!
I CAME TO SCHOOL COMPLETELY EMPTY-HANDED!

MHMM I'VE GOT MOST OF IT ORGANIZED IN MY NOTES
SO YOU FINISHED READING ALL OF THESE?
Whew
THAT'S RIGHT! THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NOTHING FOR ME TO DO HERE!
YEAH!
AND WITH NOTHING TO DO, EITHER
You just decided to follow me.
MAN, LIFE IS SO GOOD RIGHT NOW!
Haha
AND I'VE GOT A JOB LINED UP FOR AFTER GRADUATION. SO NO WORRIES ABOUT THAT
Manga
.....
YOU GET ONE OR TWO LIKE HIM, EVERY YEAR.

RIGHT
GOT THAT RIGHT
PEOPLE LIKE YOU WHO ACTUALLY KEEP ON STUDYING ARE THE RARITY NOW MS. SOMA.
OR RATHER, I SHOULD SAY MOST OF 'EM ARE LIKE MR. SHIMA, THESE DAYS
WELL
TO BE HONEST I DON'T MIND HIM BEING THIS WAY RIGHT NOW
I JUST WORRY HE'S GOING TO KEEP THAT MINDSET GOING INTO HIS PROFESSIONAL LIFE, IS ALL
DON'T GO TO SLEEP
HEY! I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU NOT TO WORRY ABOUT ME. I'LL BE FINE AS I AM

I'LL JUST KEEP MY HEAD DOWN AND LEARN THE RULES FROM THE VETERANS
I'M GOING INTO SALES, ANYWAY
I'VE SEEN MORE THAN ONE COUPLE BREAK UP ON GRADUATION BECAUSE THEY GOT TOO CAUGHT UP IN WORK
Couple is so old-fashioned
SEE?
DON'T BE TOO HARD ON HIM
AT LEAST IT MEANS ONE OF YOU ISN'T BUSY
I THINK YOU'LL GET FIRED FOR THAT
I WONDER IF IT'LL BE THAT EASY
WELL THERE'S BOUND TO BE PEOPLE WHO CAN'T KEEP UP EVEN IN THE BEST ORGANIZATION
HMM?
OH, AND ONE MORE THING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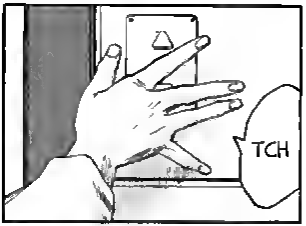

TCH

SERIOUSLY JUST DON'T ASK FOR TOO MUCH FROM ME
HAHAHAHA!

クイイ
ン

OH
HMM?
NO-THING
?
Two days ago.

ZZZ
FHEW

squeeze
YOU'RE AWAKE?
OH!
shake
キリ
HMM?
ばふっ
WHAT'RE YOU DOING? IT'S STILL MORNING
WHAT?
YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING DON'T YOU?
NO, I'M NOT
ARE YOU SLEEP-WALKING OR SOMETHING?
WHOA!
HMMM?

I HATE IT WHEN YOU WON'T GIVE UP
AWW, I WAS REALLY IN THE MOOD AND ALL
OH, C'MON SOON WE WON'T HAVE THE TIME TO DO IT IN THE MORNING, Y'KNOW
AND WE DON'T NEED TO!
UGH, HONESTLY WE DID IT ALL LAST NIGHT
OH, SOMETHING HERE'S PRETTY SOFT.
OH, SORRY
IT'S COLD.

YOU KNOW, COME SPRING WE'LL HAVE TO LIVE SEPA-RATELY AGAIN
MM...
MMPH
BUT FOR SOME REASON...
EEP
HEY! STOP!
WHY YOU...
OWW!
I THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO MANAGE

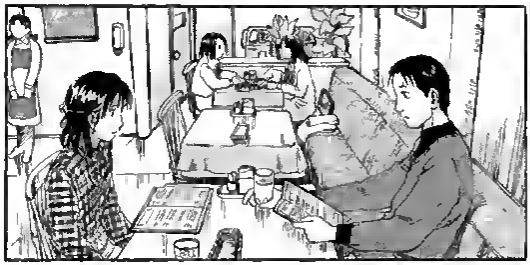
ACK! STOP!
WAIT! SERIOUSLY, STOP!
HEY!
AH!
AH!
WAIT...
ばた
ばた
Gah...
Ooh...
Ugh...
Shit I went too far

AH
WHOA
OOPS SORRY, I REALLY GOT YOU WITH THAT ONE
N-NAH, IT'S OKAY I'M TOTALLY FINE
I think I have a con-cussion

I SHOULD GET UP
SORRY
IT'S FINE
GIVE MEN FIVE MINUTES AND THEY FORGET THEY WERE EVER SORRY, ANYWAY
Damn
たったったった

YEAH, I THINK I'LL HAVE TO RENT AN APARTMENT.
THEY SAID NO WOMEN ALLOWED
And they check really thoroughly
Yeah, I get you
Tch
YEAH, BUT I CAN'T DO IT
OVER IN MITAKA RIGHT?
HUH? DIDN'T YOU SAY THE COMPANY PROVIDED LODGING?
WELL, YEAH I'M NOT SO STUPID I'D TRY TO MAKE A LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIP WORK
SHE'S GONNA BE MOVING SOMEWHERE CLOSE TO MY PLACE
SO WHAT ABOUT ARIGA?
QUITE THE PAIR OF LOVE-BIRDS, YOU TWO ARE
YOUR TURN
OH, RIGHT

YOSHINO'S BEEN KINDA COLD TO ME LATELY
SOMEHOW I FEEL LIKE WE'VE HAD THIS CONVERSATION BEFORE
Hmm. Gershou forward huh
I MADE UP MY MIND NOT TO OFFER ADVICE TO PEOPLE WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO BACK IT UP, SO SORRY
YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN WITH THIS ONE
YOU'VE GROWN UP
I'M TRYING, YEAH

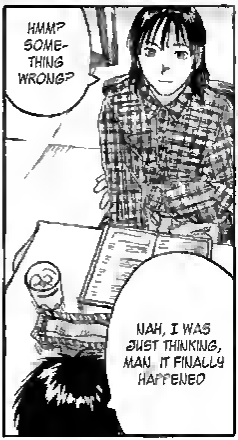


One day ago.

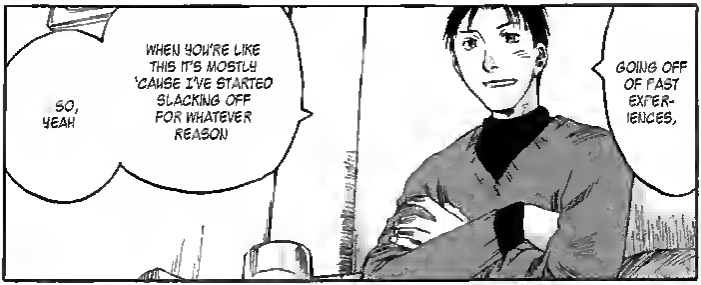
SO WE'RE GOING DUTCH TODAY?

OKAY, I'VE MADE MY CHOICE
HUH? OH YEAH, ME TOO
THIS EGGPLANT AND BACON THING...
WHERE? OH, THIS ONE?

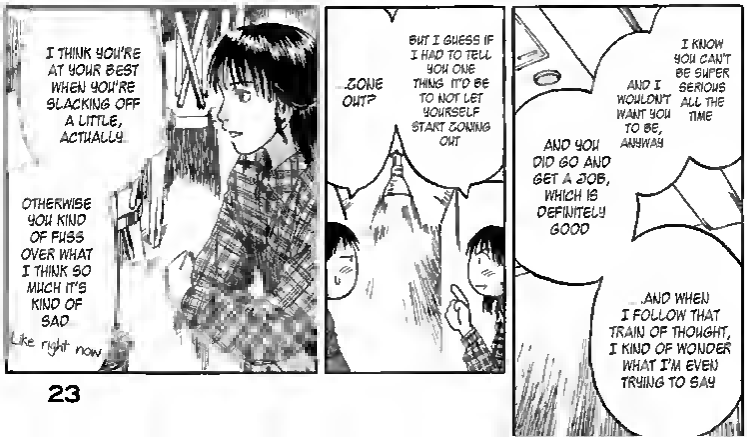
WELL, I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE EITHER OF US IS REALLY RICHER THAN THE OTHER, AND IT'S NOT LIKE YOU GAIN ANYTHING BY PICKING UP MY TAB
I THINK IT'S JUST FINE.
I GUESS


HMM? SOMETHING WRONG?
NAH, I WAS JUST THINKING, MAN, IT FINALLY HAPPENED

AND FOR ME THE MUSH-ROOM AND SPINACH CARBONARA PLEASE
MMM... FIRST, THE EGGPLANT AND BACON SPAGHETTI WITH OLIVE OIL FOR HIM...
WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER?
I CAN'T BELIEVE I JUST LET YOU ORDER FOR ME
WHAT? IT'S NOT MY FAULT YOU'RE BEING SHY.
ALL RIGHT LET ME TAKE AWAY YOUR MENUS
THAT'LL BE ALL, THANK YOU
WELL, NO MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT
SEE?
WELL YOU'VE BEEN KINDA MAD AT ME LATELY RIGHT?
WHAT? NO, I'M NOT...
I GUESS I SHOULD START SHAPING UP
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?

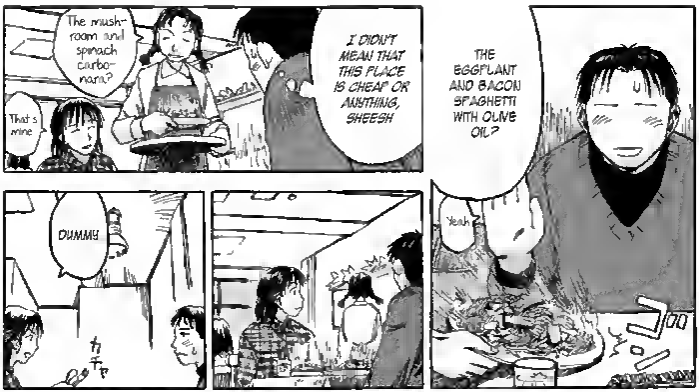

GOING OFF OF FAST EXPERIENCES,
WHEN YOU'RE LIKE THIS IT'S MOSTLY 'CAUSE I'VE STARTED SLACKING OFF FOR WHATEVER REASON
SO, YEAH

HMM...
IT'S A PART OF MYSELF I DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND, I THINK
I KNOW I'VE BEEN PRETTY SNIPPY WITH YOU LATELY
BUT I CAN'T EXACTLY HELP BEING ON EDGE THIS CLOSE TO GRADUATION
HMMM... WELL, YEAH, I GUESS


I KNOW YOU CAN'T BE SUPER SERIOUS ALL THE TIME
AND I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO BE, ANYWAY
AND YOU DID GO AND GET A JOB, WHICH IS DEFINITELY GOOD
...AND WHEN I FOLLOW THAT TRAIN OF THOUGHT, I KIND OF WONDER WHAT I'M EVEN TRYING TO SAY
BUT I GUESS IF I HAD TO TELL YOU ONE THING IT'D BE TO NOT LET YOURSELF START ZONING OUT
...ZONE OUT?
I THINK YOU'RE AT YOUR BEST WHEN YOU'RE SLACKING OFF A LITTLE, ACTUALLY...
OTHERWISE YOU KIND OF FUSS OVER WHAT I THINK SO MUCH IT'S KIND OF SAD
like right now

WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS...
IF YOU KNEW HOW TO REALLY HUMOR ME AND GET A HANDLE ON MY FEELINGS...
AND NOW YOU'RE STARTING TO RELAX AFTER HEARING THAT, HUH?
IN OTHER WORDS IF YOU COULD INFLUENCE ME ENOUGH TO MAKE ME STOP BEING SO SHORT-TEMPERED WITH YOU...
I'M KINDA REGRET-TING BRINGING THIS UP
YEAH I GUESS YOU JUST DON'T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES
I SUPPOSE WE'LL HAVE TO BREAK UP
YOU WOULDN'T EVEN HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THIS SORT OF THING
Haha...

I'M EVEN GETTING A PROPER JOB AND ALL
U-YEAH
I KNOW I'M NOT EASY FOR GUYS TO STAND
STILL, YOU'RE TRYING
THAT'S RIGHT. YOU HAVE TO REALLY THINK ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ACTIONS NOW
IF BOTH OF US EARN A LOT OF MONEY
GUESS I CAN'T AFFORD TO BE A LACKADAISY STUDENT ANYMORE
MAN I'M GONNA BE A MEMBER OF THE WORK-FORCE, HUH
I GUESS THAT SOLID YEAR OF LOOKING FOR A JOB REALLY DID BEAR FRUIT
HMM
I CAN HEAR THE SOUND OF YOUR EGO INFLATING FROM HERE
AND WHEN IT COMES TO FOOTING THE BILL ALONE, IT'S UP TO THE MALE TO MAKE A SHOW OF STRENGTH
ACTUALLY, GOING DUTCH KINDA MAKES IT HARD TO EAT ANYTHING TOO EXPENSIVE, DOESN'T IT?
YOU REALIZE YOU'RE THE ONE FAKING FOR THE STUFF, AND YOU GET SECOND THOUGHTS
...THAT'S ONE THING YES
WELL... WE'LL BE ABLE TO EAT OUT AT BETTER RESTAURANTS AT LEAST

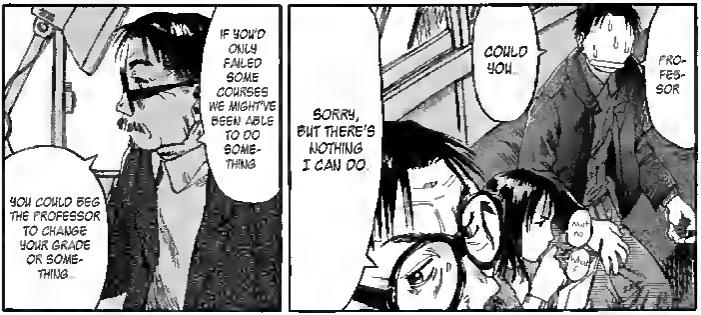

The mushroom and spinach carbonara?
That's mine
I DIDN'T MEAN THAT THIS PLACE IS CHEAP OR ANYTHING, SHEESH
THE EGGPLANT AND BACON SPAGHETTI WITH OLIVE OIL?
Yeah
DUMMY

That's how things were.

IN THE BOTTOM CUPBOARD TO THE RIGHT
WHERE'S THE KETTLE?
AH. HELLO? IT'S ME, TANI-YAMA.
CLK
BAM
PII
You have one new message
WANT ME TO PUT THE KETTLE ON?
OH, RIGHT, WOULD YOU?
WELL ANYWAY, IF YOU SEE HIM, COULD YOU TELL HIM TO COME TO SCHOOL?
PREFERABLY AS FAST AS POSSIBLE THANKS
CLK
I COULDN'T REACH MR SHIMA SO I TRIED THIS NUMBER TOO, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE NOT IN RIGHT NOW, EITHER
HMM?
PROFESSOR TANIYAMA?
WHAT'S HE WANT?
I DON'T KNOW, HE JUST SAID FOR YOU TO COME TO CAMPUS
HUH?
AKIO, IT WAS PROFESSOR TANIYAMA...
PII
End of mes-
PII
Mes sage deleted.
PII
Message recorded at six, twenty, four, p.m.
?

HMM
WHAT COULD IT BE?
I DON'T KNOW
RIGHT NOW?
WELL, HE DID SAY AS FAST AS POSSIBLE, BUT IT'S ALREADY PAST EIGHT
Maybe something happened
Beats me
And that's how things were.
WHAAAT?!
What?
That'll lead to a loss
You're right the 14th and 15th
And then, today.
Yes, from the 13th to the 15th.
What about the week end?

No. It's to be right from the beginning. Even if we asked them
Maybe if we tried to move the... no. It's four credits per course, so

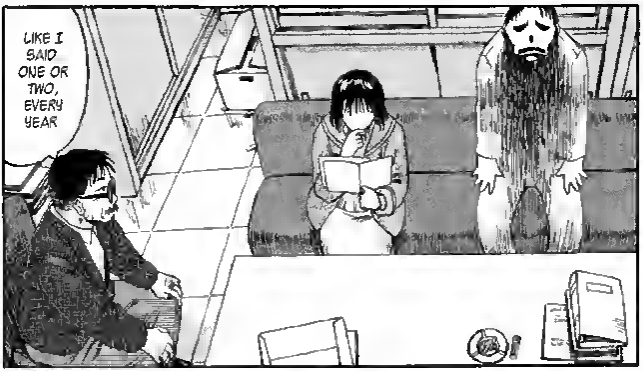

PROFESSOR
COULD YOU...
SORRY, BUT THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO.
IF YOU'D ONLY FAILED SOME COURSES WE MIGHT'VE BEEN ABLE TO DO SOMETHING
YOU COULD BEG THE PROFESSOR TO CHANGE YOUR GRADE OR SOMETHING...

Well
BUT SINCE YOU DIDN'T EVEN REGISTER FOR THE COURSE YOU NEED
AAAH
ボリボリ
WELL, THERE MIGHT BE A WAY...

ALL YOU'RE MISSING IS ONE REQUIRED ELECTIVE FOR YOUR MAJOR
SO NORMALLY YOU COULD TAKE ONE FROM YOUR GENERAL ELECTIVES AND GET THE DEPARTMENT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT AS A REQUIRED ELECTIVE
THEN I CAN-
NO, YOU CAN'T
MS SOMA,
WOULD YOU EXPLAIN WHY?
WHA, WHY NOT?!
BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE ANY GENERAL ELECTIVES YOU CAN AFFORD TO MOVE
YOU KNOW,
THE UNIVERSITY WANTS YOU TO GRADUATE, TOO
You just get in the way

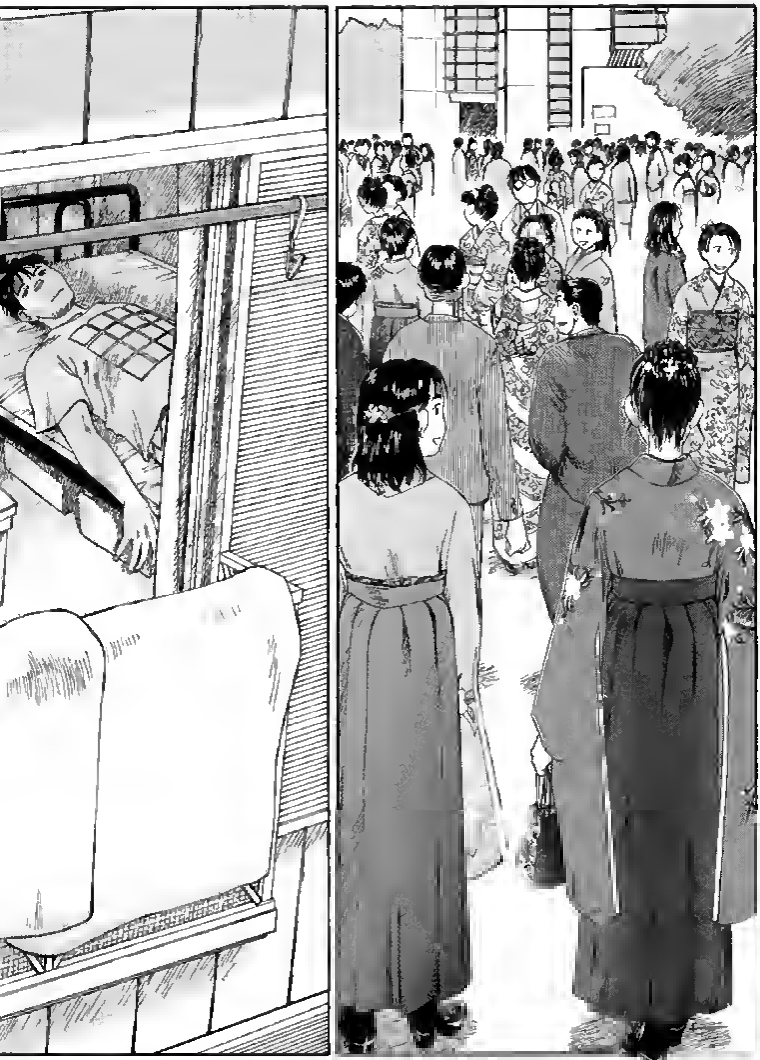
BUT WE CAN'T MAKE IT HAPPEN. NOT THIS SEMESTER
GIVE IT UP.
ブッブー
ブッ
THEN... THAT MEANS

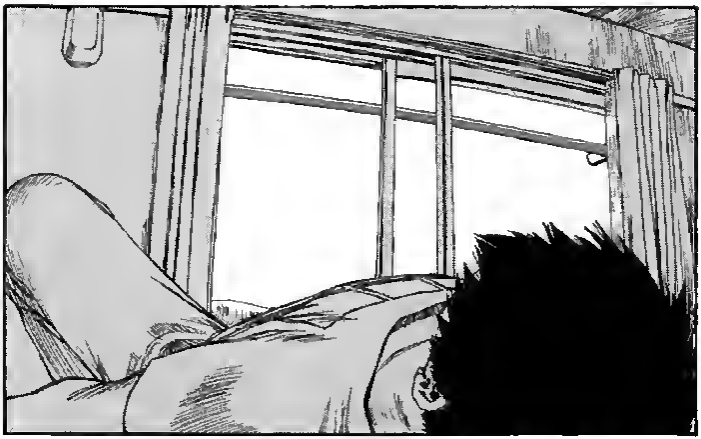
THAT MEANS...
HMM?
THEN DOESN'T THAT MEAN...
THAT MEANS, WHAT? WHAT'RE YOU TRYING TO SAY?
W-WELL, I MEAN, DOESN'T THAT MEAN, Y'KNOW?!
THAT I'M...
WHAT IT MEANS IS...



Chapter 1 - End

Chapter 2
This Is Why I Dropped Out





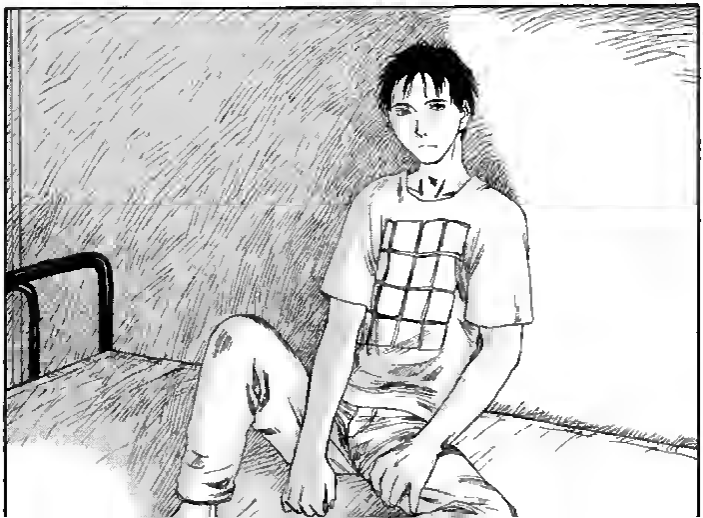
NOT JUST TODAY HE'S BEEN TOTALLY AWOL LATELY
I haven't seen him around
I DON'T KNOW I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM TODAY

SO, WHERE'S AKIO?

I ALMOST CAN'T BELIEVE IT HE HAD A JOB LINED UP AND EVERYTHING, BUT HE CAN'T GRADUATE
Yeah, it's really sad
HE SPENDS ALL HIS TIME MOPING THESE DAYS

HE ONLY CHIPPED IN A LITTLE FOR THE FLOWERS
OF COURSE NOT, HE DIDN'T PAY THE FEE TO ATTEND
IS HE AT LEAST GONNA BE AT THE PROFESSOR'S THANK-YOU PARTY?
NOT ALL OF THEM
WHY DO ALL THE MEN I DATE TURN OUT LIKE THIS?

HEY, I BROUGHT MY CAMERA, LET'S ALL TAKE A GROUP PICTURE TOGETHER IN A BIT!
REALLY?
THAT'S A SHAME I WOULD'VE LIKED FOR US ALL TO HAVE A DRINK TOGETHER, ONE LAST TIME



Whew
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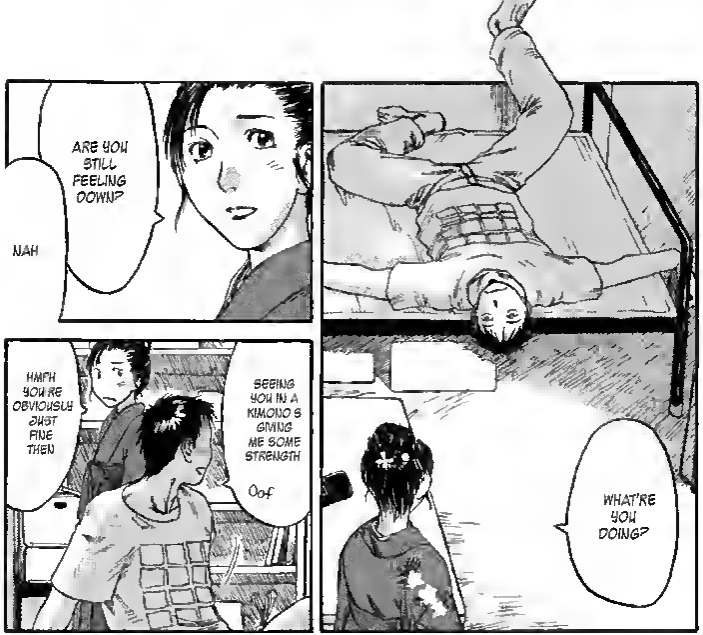
ガチャ
AKIO? ARE YOU IN THERE?
UGGH...


ARE YOU STILL FEELING DOWN?
NAH
HMPH YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY JUST FINE THEN
SEEING YOU IN A KIMONO'S GIVING ME SOME STRENGTH
Oof
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?

WHY?
THEY AREN'T TIGHT AROUND MY WAIST LIKE PANTY-HOSE ARE
YUP OH, AND LOOK!
HUH, REALLY?
GRANNY STOCKINGS!
It comes up to my knees
WOW YOU'RE WEARING A HAKAMA, TOO?
YEAH, BUT IT'S NOT MADE THAT DIFFERENT FROM A REGULAR SKIRT

ALRIGHT!
I'M GOING TO CHANGE OUT OF THIS NOW, SO NO PEEKING!
GET A GRIP ON YOURSELF!
DO YOU EXPECT ME TO PUT ON A STRIP SHOW FOR YOU?
Hmph!
WHAAAT? C'MON, NOT EVEN A LITTLE?
...WEREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE FEELING DOWN?
SHOO, SHOO!
THAT'S RIGHT I NEED TO LAY THESE ON THE BED
OH!
Didn't you tell me, you liked me best when I was slacking off?

IT'S STILL EATING AT YOU INSIDE, ISN'T IT.
WELL... YEAH HOW CAN IT NOT?
I PUT IN ALL THAT EFFORT
AND FUCKED IT ALL UP 'CAUSE OF ONE STUPID MISTAKE

I'M FINE WITH TAKING ANOTHER SEMESTER
YEAH, IT'S A LITTLE EMBARRASSING, BUT IT'S ALRIGHT AS LONG AS I GET THE CREDITS I NEED
IT'S JUST...
WHEN I THINK OF RUNNING AROUND LOOKING FOR A JOB ALL OVER AGAIN
MAN IT REALLY KNOCKS THE WIND OUTTA MY SAILS
BUT YOU'LL DO IT ANYWAY, RIGHT?
HAH, I KNEW THAT'D BE THE FIRST THING YOU SAID
I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT
SORRY

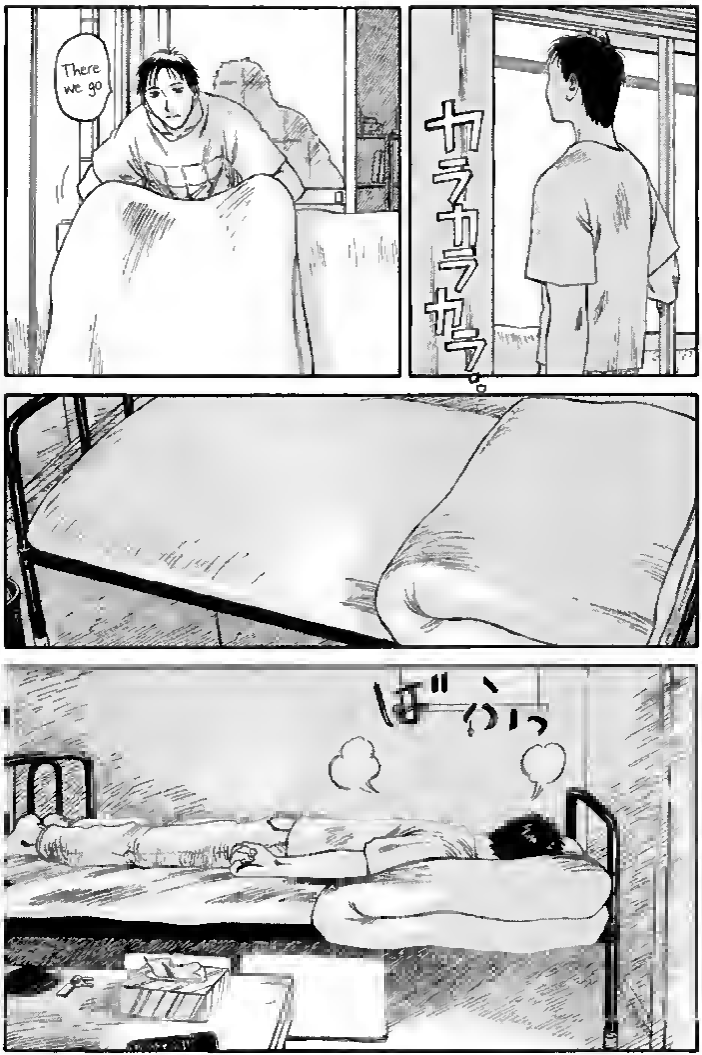
OKAY, YOU CAN TURN AROUND NOW
OKAY
HUH? YOU'RE GONNA GO TO THE PARTY LIKE THAT?
NO, JUST FOR NOW
I'VE STILL GOT A WHILE TILL IT'S TIME TO GO
WOULD YOU OPEN THE CURTAINS?
SURE

...IT'S HARD TO SEE WHERE WE'LL GO FROM HERE NOW, ISN'T IT
MMM...
Y'KNOW, UNTIL A WHILE AGO I WAS THINKING ABOUT WHEN IT'D BE A GOOD TIME TO GET MARRIED
OH, REALLY?
AND AFTER ALL THAT PLANNING WE DID ON HOW WE'D MEET UP IN TOKYO
HEH, YEAH
GUESS THOSE PLANS'VE ALL GONE DOWN THE DRAIN
YUP, WASHED RIGHT AWAY
WE'LL JUST HAVE TO KEEP UP A LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIP, THEN

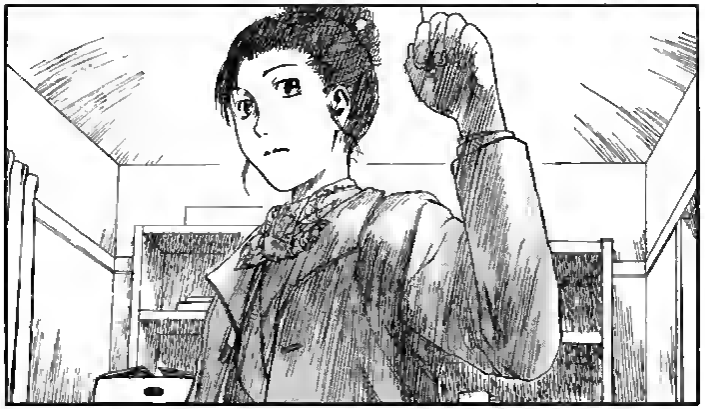
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
...WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE WHAT I THINK'LL CHANGE ANY-THING
AGH, DAMMIT!
IS MY WHOLE LIFE REALLY CHANGING LIKE THIS JUST BECAUSE OF ONE LOUSY MISSED COURSE?!
YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT...
ドキ
ドキ
YOU HATE IT, DON'T YOU?

HUH?
WELL, UHH
YEAH, OF COURSE
THEN TAKE THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHAPE UP
OKAY?
OKAY
MMM
GOOD BOY
AND IF WE DID END UP BREAKING UP OVER THIS, I'D REALLY BE BAD LUCK AS A GIRLFRIEND, WOULDN'T I
DON'T WORRY YOURSELF OVER THAT
WELL, I'M NOT, NOT EXACTLY
BUT STILL, YOU HAVE TO ADMIT IT KIND OF SEEMS THAT WAY

MAYBE
Haha
MAYBE YOU'RE JUST REALLY BAD AT CHOOSING GUYS TO FALL FOR, HUH?
Hehehehh
DON'T WORRY, I'M THE ONE WHO DID THE DUMPING
I REALLY THINK THAT'S A PROBLEM
OKAY
DON'T FORGET TO BRING IN THE FUTON!
ALRIGHT, SEE YOU LATER


There we go
カラカラカラ。
ぱふっ

I GUESS THINGS LL TURN OUT OKAY SOMEHOW OR OTHER...
...UGH...
MAN...
IT'S SO WARM...



OH.
I SAW THE LIGHTS WERE OFF AND THOUGHT YOU'D GONE HOME
WHAT? HUH?
WHAT TIME IS IT?
SHIT, I FELL ASLEEP
HALF PAST TEN
OH, DAMN
I DROOLED ON THE FUTON
AND I'D JUST DRIED IT TOO
HALF PAST TEN?
WHAT THE HELL, I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE ANYTHING TO EAT
Man-Im still drowsy and hungry too
REALLY? THAT'S TOO BAD, THERE'S NOTHING TO EAT HERE
HAHAH
GUESS I'LL HAVE TO DROP BY A CORNER STORE

OH YEAH
I'M GOING TO TAKE A SHOWER SO YOU CAN GO OUT AND GET SOMETHING TO EAT WHILE I WASH UP
ガチャッ

I DUNNO. YOU JUST LOOK A LITTLE PUT OUT ABOUT SOMETHING
YOU'RE SHARP.
IT'S JUST, WELL...
HMM?
WHY?
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?
AT THE PARTY, I MEAN.
I THINK I MIGHT REALLY BE BAD LUCK OR SOMETHING
HUH?
NO, NO
WELL?
WHAT DID THEY SAY SOMETHING ABOUT ME?
I WAS PREPARED FOR THAT, SO IT WASN'T SO BAD

REMEMBER MY EX, KAWAI?
I HEARD HE DROPPED OUT
HUH
WHY?
I DON'T KNOW I JUST HAPPENED TO OVERHEAR SOME PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT IT SO I DON'T KNOW THE REASON
I WONDER MAYBE THERE REALLY IS SOMETHING ABOUT ME
WHAT? NO
THAT WAS KAWAI'S DECISION
AND I DON'T THINK HE'D DROP OUT OF SCHOOL OVER AN EX-GIRLFRIEND OR ANYTHING

WELL I MEAN, I DON'T REALLY KNOW BUT STILL
REALLY, NOW
BESIDES, MAKING THE DECISION TO QUIT SCHOOL AIN'T ALWAYS A BAD THING YOU RE MAKING ASSUMPTIONS
I DON'T KNOW
ME HAVING TO TAKE ANOTHER SEMESTER IS ALL MY OWN DAMN FAULT TOO, Y'KNOW?
MAYBE HE JUST FELT LIKE HE WAS FREE AFTER HE BROKE UP WITH YOU?
BUT I WONDER WHY HE DID IT
APPARENTLY HE DROPPED OUT A LONG TIME AGO
DON'T YOU GO DROPPING OUT, TOO
YEAH, YEAH

HAHA.
THEN HOW ABOUT WE BREAK UP TOO, AKIO?

LOOK I KNOW I'M A PRETTY DIFFICULT GIRL TO GET ALONG WITH.
WHAT?
AND WHEN WE BROKE UP, KAWAI TOLD ME HE FELT LIKE A WEIGHT'D BEEN LIFTED OFF HIS CHEST.
KIDS USED TO TEASE ME IN JUNIOR HIGH ABOUT IT
BUT YOU KNOW WHAT?

I'M SICK OF YOU BLAMING ME FOR YOUR OWN PROBLEMS!
CAN'T YOU SEE HOW HARD IT IS FOR ME, TOO?!
WHA

WHA...
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU ALL OF A SUDDEN?
WHY'RE YOU SO ANGRY?
FINE...DO WHATEVER YOU WANT
I'LL GO TO TOKYO AND LET YOU BE AS FREE AS YOU WANT
YOU CAN FIND A GIRL WHO'S A LOT NICER THAN SOMEONE LIKE ME
AND TAKE ANOTHER...

AND TAKE ANOTHER YEAR

Chapter 3
The Last Supper

DO YOU HAVE ANY BASIL?
WELL, YEAH
BUT IT'S THE KIND YOU SPRINKLE ON SPAGHETTI
OH THOSE USUALLY HAVE SALT INCLUDED IN THEM
THEY'RE KIND OF HARD TO USE FOR COOKING
I ALREADY PACKED ALL MY STUFF, SO I GUESS WE SHOULD BUY SOME
I DON'T THINK WE'LL USE THE WHOLE THING TODAY. BUT YOU CAN USE WHAT'S LEFT OVER LATER, RIGHT?
YEAH SURE
Let's see. Octopus tomatoes sausage. And we already have broth.
Oh right, cheese

AND IT'S GOTTEN COLD AGAIN, TOO
YEAH, BUT SPRING'LL BE WARM TO MAKE UP FOR IT
MAN, IT'S KINDA DREARY FOR SOME REASON
DyDoo
YEAH, A LITTLE
IT'S JUST A PAIN TO HAVE EVERYONE STARING
And it looks like I'm making you do everything
YOU DON'T WANT US TO BE TOO LOVEY-DOVEY IN PUBLIC?
WAS IT BECAUSE...
HMM?
SO, ABOUT THE SHOPPING BASKET
WHY DIDN'T YOU LET ME CARRY IT FOR YOU?

BUT IT'S NOT LIKE WE'LL BE ABLE TO GO OUT TOGETHER LIKE THIS MUCH FROM NOW ON
OH YOU'RE RIGHT
WELL, WE'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT
YOU KNOW, YOSHINO YOU'RE USUALLY PRETTY QUIET
BUT
HUH?
BUT WHEN YOU LET IT ALL EXPLODE AFTER LETTING IT EAT AT YOU FOR A WHILE, YOU'RE REALLY SCARY
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT THAT THING FROM A FEW DAYS AGO?
LET'S JUST FORGET THAT HAPPENED OKAY?

I THINK MOST OF IT WAS BECAUSE I KEPT ASKING YOU ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED AT THE PARTY,
BUT IT REALLY FELT LIKE YOU'D BEEN LETTING A LOT OF THINGS BUILD UP INSIDE YOU, AND IT ALL EXPLODED AT ONCE
WELL, THAT'S JUST HOW FEELINGS WORK SOMETIMES

IS THE RICE DONE YET?
ALMOST, IT'S JUST STARTING TO SETTLE GIVE IT MAYBE EIGHT MORE MINUTES

ボフォ
ガチー
THEN IT'LL BE RIGHT ON TIME IF WE START COOKING NOW
CAN YOU PUT THE BROTH CUBES ON THE STOVE?
GOTCHA
DO YOU HAVE AN APRON?
NOPE
I THOUGHT AS MUCH DO YOU HAVE A SHIRT YOU DON'T MIND GETTING DIRTY, THEN?
HERE
From the laundry basket
Eww
Well I guess it'll do
YOU CAN JUST STICK THE SAUSAGES IN ONCE THE BROTH MELTS
UH HUH
OH, NO, WAIT, I SHOULD SCORE THEM FIRST

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だん！
ベリ ベリ
ベリ ベリ
HEY, Y KNOW WHAT? HAVING TO TAKE ANOTHER SEMESTER MADE ME REALIZE
MAN, IT'S REALLY GOOD TO BE A STUDENT
HUH?

I KNOW I SHOULDN'T BE SAYING THIS,
BUT A PART OF ME WAS ALMOST HAPPY WHEN I REALIZED I WAS GONNA BE A STUDENT FOR A BIT LONGER
THE THOUGHT OF REALLY BECOMING A PART OF SOCIETY IS KINDA INTIMIDATING
HMM
TO BE HONEST I'D HOPE YOU WOULDN'T THINK ABOUT IT THAT WAY TOO MUCH
YEAH, YEAH
SOMETIMES I JUST REALLY DON'T WANNA BECOME PART OF SOCIETY Y KNOW?
OH IT'S ALL MELTED NOW
Smells good
OH THEN WE SHOULD PUT IN THE SAUSAGES
YOU HAD ANOTHER KNIFE, RIGHT?
YEAH, A LITTLE ONE
AND SINCE WHEN DID YOU START HAVING SUCH LOFTY THOUGHTS ABOUT SOCIETY, ANYWAY?
HAHA

ALRIGHT, IN WITH THE ONIONS TOO
OKAY, WE HAVE FIVE
THAT'S FINE YOU CAN JUST HAVE THREE
WHAT NEXT?
COULD YOU GRATE THE GARLIC?
WELL, I HAVE TO ADMIT, EVEN WATCHING THE NEWS IS A LITTLE DEPRESSING THESE DAYS
POLI-TICS
ECONO-MICS
EDUCA-TION

I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW MANY POLITICAL PARTIES THERE ARE NOW
REALLY?
MAN, I SAW POLITICIANS FILIBUSTERING ONCE AND IT JUST TOTALLY KILLED ANY INTEREST IN POLITICS I MIGHT'VE HAD
HAHA, I REMEMBER THAT
THAT DOESN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH YOU TAKING ANOTHER SEMESTER THOUGH
YEAH, I GET THAT
CLICK
CHAK
I'VE GOT IT.
WANT ME TO OPEN THAT FOR YOU?
I'M NOT GONNA HAVE SOMETHING TO REALLY GRAB MY ATTENTION WHILE I TAKE THE SEMESTER OVER
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
HMM?
Y'KNOW WHAT, THOUGH?

I'M NOT GONNA HAVE ANY CLUBS OR ANYTHING TO DISTRACT ME
IT'LL BE EASY TO GET BACK ON MY FEET
Ack, garlic
LIKE I'M NOT PART OF A BAND
I DON'T LIKE MAHJONG I DON'T WATCH MOVIES
WITH GAMES I GUESS A LITTLE
EVEN THOSE YOU ONLY BUY USED
IN OTHER WORDS...
DOESN'T THAT JUST MEAN THERE'S NOTHING YOU'RE ACTUALLY PASSIONATE ABOUT?
YOU'RE ONLY ABLE TO BUY THEM SO CHEAP BECAUSE COPYRIGHT LAW DOESN'T COVER VIDEO GAMES YET *
AND BESIDES...
Okay, time for the octopus
WHAT?
WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
LONG LIVE CHEAP USED GAMES
OH, YEAH USED GAMES

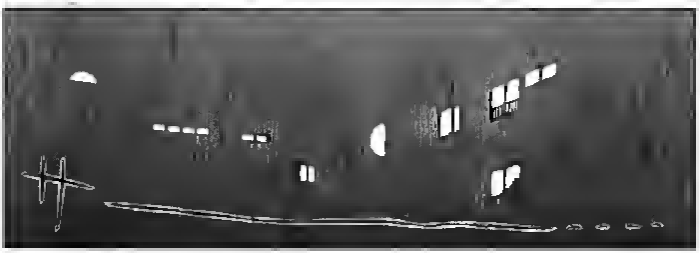
* In Japan, it is illegal to resell used media without permission from the original creator. At the time of this work, video games did not fall under this law (though renting of video games has always been illegal), but since then, new legislations were passed limiting the resale of games and gaming consoles as well.

THINK ABOUT IT
MUSIC, ART, COMPUTER PROGRAMS, AND EVEN IDEAS ALL FALL UNDER COPYRIGHT PROTECTION
BUT VIDEO GAMES, DESPITE BEING COMPOSED OF ALL OF THOSE THINGS, DON'T.
THE LAST REVISION TO COPYRIGHT LAW WAS BACK IN 1970
VIDEO GAMES AS WE KNOW THEM WEREN'T ANYWHERE NEAR AS WIDESPREAD BACK THEN
MAN, THAT'S BEFORE WE WERE EVEN BORN
AND IT'S EASY TO SEE WHY THE LAWS FOR VIDEO GAMES ARE SO POORLY DEFINED
LIFE CHANGES SO QUICKLY
AND OUR LAWS JUST CAN'T KEEP UP
WOW
YOU'RE A LAW STUDENT TOO, YOU KNOW
TECHNICALLY

FOR SPAGHETTI, I GUESS
DO YOU EVEN USE IT FOR ANYTHING?
OH, YOU HAVE OLIVE OIL?
ME?
YOU ALREADY HAVE GARLIC ON YOUR HANDS, IT'S FINE
ALRIGHT, RUB THIS ON THE OCTOPUS, ALONG WITH THE GARLIC AND SOME SALT
OKAY
OH AND THE BASIL TOO
I SAW THE RECIPE IN A BOOK A LONG TIME AGO I DON'T THINK IT HAD A NAME
Maybe it has one? I don't know
YOU DON'T?
I GUESS IT'S LIKE A SPANISH STYLE HOTPOT OR SOMETHING
The sausages are just because I like them
I DON'T KNOW
SO WHAT'S THIS CALLED?
THEN JUST CHOP UP THE LETTUCE AND TOSS IT IN
AND FINISH IT OFF WITH MORE BASIL AND CHEESE FOR GARNISH
THE OCTOPUS ONLY NEEDS TO BE BLANCHED FOR A SECOND

YOU DON'T HAVE OCTOPUS OFTEN, RIGHT?
YEAH...

SCOOP SOME RICE, WILL YOU?
ALRIGHT, TIME TO EAT



はふ
はふ
はふ
MMM, MMM!
もぐもぐ
PILE SOME TOMATO AND OCTOPUS AND ONION ALL TOGETHER LIKE THIS, SHOVEL IT ALL IN WITH A MOUTHFUL OF RICE, AND
WHEW! THE TOMATOES ARE SO HOT AND TASTY!
かふ
かふ
THEY'RE PRETTY GOOD COOKED AREN'T THEY?
MHMM
IT'S JUST THE RIGHT BALANCE OF CHEWY AND MOIST!

MAN, THIS IS THE LAST TIME I'LL GET TO EAT YOUR COOKING, HUH
WELL, I MEAN HERE IN KISA-RAGU
OH, RIGHT...
WHAT? NO, OF COURSE NOT
I PUT SOME THOUGHT INTO THE TROUBLES I'LL RUN INTO ONCE YOU LEAVE
FIRST MY EATING HABITS LL GO TO SHIT, THEN MY VOCAL CORDS LL SHRIVEL AND WITHER AWAY 'CAUSE I'LL HAVE NOBODY TO TALK TO...
I'M ALSO GONNA GET REALLY BLUE-BALLED 'CAUSE WE CAN'T HAVE SEX
YOU PERV
IT'S NOT GOING TO BE THAT SIMPLE
DON'T BE SILLY

IT'LL BE A LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIP! WE'LL PROBABLY RUN INTO A LOT OF PROBLEMS.
HUH?
I MEAN WE WON'T HAVE ANY TIME TO MEET OR EVEN TALK TO EACH OTHER
THEN IT'LL BE HARD TO EVEN START UP A CONVERSATION SO THINGS'LL GET AWKWARD BETWEEN US...
AND WE WON'T EVEN CALL UNLESS SOMETHING REALLY IMPORTANT COMES UP
AND SOMETIMES WE MIGHT FORGET EVEN THEN
OR FIND IT TOO MUCH OF A HASSLE TO CALL
AND IT'LL BECOME A VICIOUS CYCLE...

...WHERE WE START DOUBTING EACH OTHER MORE AND MORE,
AND JUST GROW FARTHER APART
YOU REALLY THINK I DON'T REALIZE THAT?!
SO SINCE WE ALREADY KNOW IT'S COMING...

MAYBE WE CAN KEEP ALL OF THAT FROM HAPPENING.

I DUNNO
I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT
MAN, THE SAUSAGES REALLY BULK THE DISH UP, HUH
MHMM I'M ALREADY FULL, TOO

KINDA A LITTLE TALKED OUT, I GUESS
TIRED?
Whew
HAHA
WE'VE BEEN TALKING SINCE LUNCHTIME PRETTY MUCH NON-STOP
パラ

THERE'S STILL LOTS OF STUFF I FEEL LIKE WE SHOULD TALK ABOUT
BUT I GUESS IT'S ALRIGHT
YEAH
SO WHAT ABOUT TOMORROW?
I'VE GOT TO GO TO THE REALTOR'S OFFICE AND DO A FEW OTHER THINGS
BUT I'LL TRY AND DROP BY AROUND THREE
THOUGH I'LL PROBABLY ONLY HAVE TIME FOR TEA
ALRIGHT

AND WHAT ABOUT THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW?
THE MOVERS ARE COMING IN AROUND NINE IN THE MORNIG
YEAH
YOU'LL HELP ME OUT, RIGHT?
WHEN WE'RE DONE I'LL JUST GO HOME BY SUBWAY
I'LL GO WITH YOU TO THE STATION
OKAY

IF YOU KEEP GOING THROUGH LIFE LIKE YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE IN IT...
...GOING ON INSIDE THIS HEAD OF YOURS, HUH
MAN SO MANY THOUGHTS...
OWW
NOTHING I JUST DID IT...
WHAT WAS THAT FOR?
HUH?

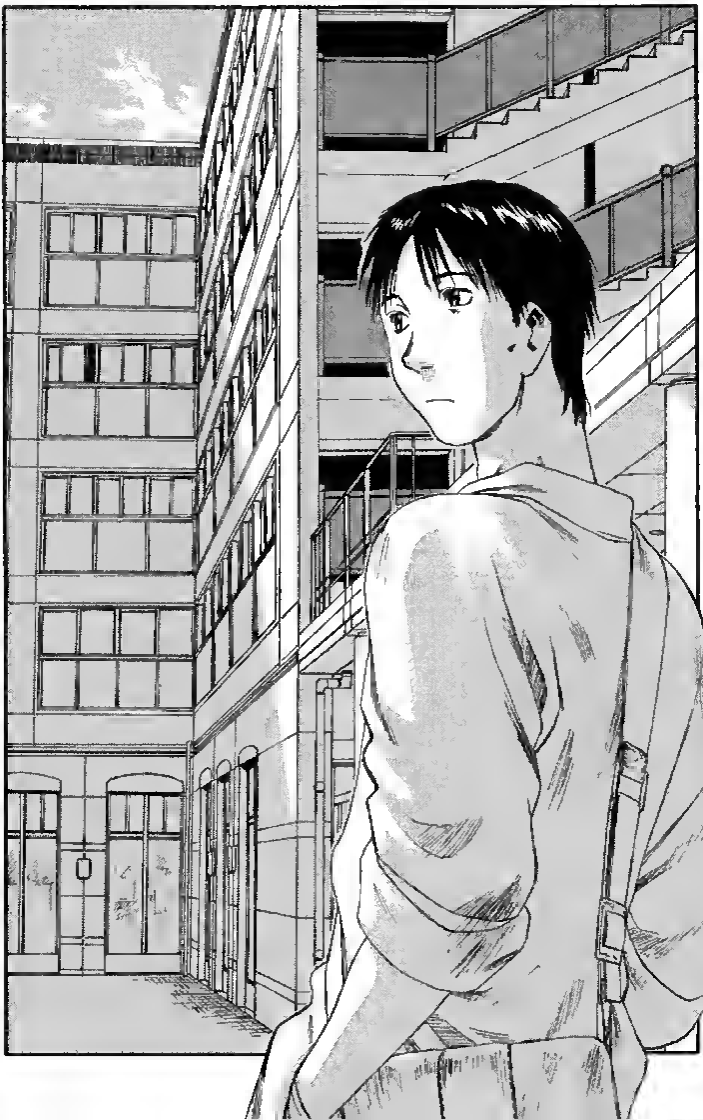
I THINK THAT'S ENOUGH TALKING FOR TONIGHT.
HEHEH.

CAN'T BEAT WOMEN...
Nnn...
Mmm
Ah

It was desperately silent.
That was how passionate we were.

Chapter 3 - End

Chapter 4 - Disappearing...



AHEM WELL YOU ALL ARE THIRD YEARS NOW, WHICH AS YOU KNOW MEANS YOU SHOULD BE MAKING PROGRESS ON YOUR MAJORS
THIS SEMINAR WILL HELP YOU ACHIEVE THAT GOAL IN THE TWO YEARS YOU HAVE LEFT,
LETTING YOU PLAN AHEAD ON WHICH COURSES YOU'LL NEED TO TAKE IN ORDER TO COMPLETE YOUR DEGREES
THIS SEMINAR IS TECHNICALLY SUPPOSED TO REMIND YOU TO BE ALERT AND RESPONSIBLE IN YOUR COURSE PLANNING,
BUT THESE DAYS WE JUST HAND OUT THESE HELPFUL AND EASY-TO-READ CURRICULUM CHARTS JUST NOD AND DO WHAT THEY TELL YOU TO DO
Haha

EVEN THEN, PAY ATTENTION, OR YOU MIGHT END UP TAKING ANOTHER YEAR LIKE THAT FOOL SITTING OVER THERE!
AND HERE I WAS WONDERIN' WHY HE'D ASKED ME TO COME
Hahaha

WELL, YEAH
IT'S KIND OF A PAIN
SO, I HEARD YOU AREN'T COMING TO THE DRINKING PARTY ON FRIDAY
MR HATO-YAMA TOLD ME
IDIOT IT'S A PARTY FOR MY SEMINAR STUDENTS
I'M A FIFTH YEAR, Y KNOW
'SIDES, IT'S FOR THIRD AND FOURTH YEARS NOTHING TO DO WITH ME
WHAT ARE YOU, MY MOM? I TALK AT MY PART-TIME JOB ALL THE TIME
HOW OFTEN DO YOU TALK TO OTHER HUMAN BEINGS THESE DAYS?
SO BE THERE
AND THAT IN-CLUDES YOU
WELL I DUNNO

WELL, YEAH, BUT...
Y'KNOW, I'M NOT REALLY FEELING IT YET
I THOUGHT YOU'D SPEND ALL YOUR TIME CRYING BY YOURSELF NOW THAT MS. SOMA'S NOT HERE
REALLY NOW
COURSE NOT.
YEAH, I WORK THE GRAVEYARD SHIFT AT A CORNER STORE
WAIT PART-TIME?
SHOULDN'T YOU BE LOOKING FOR A PROPER JOB?
YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO WASTE ANY TIME THIS YEAR
ARE YOU SERIOUS?
WELL, I GUESS, MAYBE
HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP ASKING THEM FOR HANDOUTS?
YOU'RE STILL DEPENDING ON MONEY FROM YOUR PARENTS, AREN'T YOU?
NO. NOT MAYBE! YOU NEED TO BE LOOKING FOR A JOB!

AND A STABLE JOB IS SO MUCH BETTER FOR FEEDING A WIFE AND CHILDREN!
AND THAT'S NOT EVEN FACTORING IN HOW MUCH BETTER IT LOOKS TO YOUR POTENTIAL IN-LAWS!
Though you're a bit young for that
YEAH, YEAH, I UNDERSTAND
NO NO YOU DON'T!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND AT ALL THAT THIS IS YOUR FINAL CHANCE!
HUH?
THERE ARE STUDENTS WHO TAKE ANOTHER YEAR ON PURPOSE BECAUSE THEY CAN'T GET INTO THE COMPANIES THEY WANT!
COMPANIES DON'T CARE ABOUT EXTRA YEARS IN COLLEGE, BUT THEY DO CARE ABOUT PEOPLE WHO GRADUATE AND CAN'T FIND A JOB AFTERWARDS
THE TIME IS NOW, MR SHIMA
YOU DON'T WANT TO LOOK BACK AT THIS AND REGRET IT, DO YOU?
.....
.....

THEN CAN I-
IF YOU'RE GOING TO ASK TO BE A SIXTH YEAR, STOP RIGHT THERE
REALLY?
REALLY I'LL PULL STRINGS AND CALL IN FAVORS TO SEE YOU GRADUATE IF I HAVE TO
OH HUH
MS SOMA ASKED ME TO LOOK AFTER YOU YOU KNOW
SHE CALLED ME TO THANK ME FOR THE LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION I WROTE FOR HER... AND ALSO TO REPORT IN ON HOW SHE WAS DOING
Wow...
SHE PRETENDED SHE WAS ONLY JOKING,
BUT I COULD TELL SHE WAS WORRIED BECAUSE SHE KNOWS HOW YOU THINK
Man
Hahaha.
SHE'S THE ONE WHO TOLD ME YOU'D THINK OF BECOMING A SIXTH YEAR

WELL I AM THINKING ABOUT THAT SORTA STUFF, REALLY
I'M DUMB SO IT'S PROBABLY NOT THE SMARTEST THINKING, BUT STILL
BUT TO BE HONEST... RIGHT NOW MORE THAN ANYTHING...
I JUST DON'T FEEL LIKE DOING ANYTHING
WELL, I GUESS YOU WOULDN'T
ポリ
ポリ
STILL I HAVE TO ASK YOU...

IF MS SOMA WAS STILL HERE
WOULD YOU BE LOOKING FOR A JOB RIGHT NOW?
MM
I SEE
YEAH
YEAH, I PROBABLY WOULD BE

I REALLY THINK YOU SHOULD COME TO THE PARTY
HUH?
YOU NEED A CHANGE OF PACE
WE'LL GET SOME BOOZE INTO YOU
I'M KINDA SICK OF DRINKING PARTIES NOW, BUT OKAY...

カチャカチャ
しゃく しゃく しゃく しゃく
ずず....
WELL, SHE KNOWS I'M WORKING TONIGHT
I GUESS THAT'S WHY SHE'S NOT CALLING

HAH, LOOK AT ME SITTING HERE WAITING FOR A PHONE CALL.
Oh hey, some seaweed
FUNNY, AIN'T IT. IT'S LIKE I'M DATING FOR THE FIRST TIME AGAIN
ちゅる。。
ガぶ ガぶ ガぶ
WELL, WHATEVER EAT FIRST, THINK LATER
Friday

OH, HEY, SHIMA
HEYA
THE PROFE-SSOR GOT HERE EARLY
BUT THE THIRD YEARS AREN'T HERE YET
OH, YOU GOT THE THIRD YEARS GATHERING AT CAMPUS BEFORE THEY COME HERE, RIGHT?
UH HUH
ANYWAY, HEAD ON IN
AH, GOOD, YOU DECIDED TO COME AFTER ALL
SUP

ALRIGHT, I THINK A FEW PEOPLE HAVEN'T GOTTEN HERE YET,
BUT I THINK MOST OF US ARE SO LET'S GET STARTED
PROFESSOR TANIYAMA
IF YOU COULD START US OFF WITH A SPEECH?
MMM, RIGHT
AHEM... ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER SEA OF NEW FACES
PERSONALLY, I'M JUST GLAD MY SEMINARS ALWAYS SEEM TO HAVE MORE THAN THEIR FAIR SHARE OF PRETTY GIRLS
A TOAST, TO THE BEAUTY OF OUR FEMALE STUDENTS!
Cheeeers!
ALRIGHT, TIME FOR EVERYONE ELSE TO INTRODUCE THEM-SELVES
Didn't you say that last hour too
Hahaha
WE'LL START WITH THE THIRD YEARS STAND UP AND JUST SAY A LITTLE SOMETHING
Who first?
Let's go from the ends first

HERE, HAVE SOME MORE
I'm Kanno I'm Fi rom
OH, THANKS
H, I'm Kanagawa, but I don't do karaoke
H, I'm Matsuhara from Ohara. In my spare time I like to
It's all just deep-fried stuff huh
Fine fine
JUST DO IT!
I'M A FIFTH YEAR, CAN'T I GO LAST?
HAHAHA
YOU'RE NEXT.
It's nice to meet you all

I'M HAROLD EVER ON CAMPUS SO I PROBABLY WON'T SEE YOU GUYS OFTEN, BUT IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU ANYWAY
HEY, I'M SHIMA
IT'S MY FIFTH YEAR HERE 'CAUSE I COULDN'T GRADUATE LAST YEAR
THAT'S ABOUT ALL I CAN SAY ABOUT YOU
YEAH, YEAH, I KNOW
CONSIDER HIM AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT NOT TO DO
パチ
パチ
パチ
HAHAHA
ACCORDING TO TRADE LAW, BROKERS ARE PEOPLE OR ORGANIZATIONS THAT BUY AND SELL GOODS FOR OTHER PEOPLE BUT DO SO IN THEIR OWN NAME, ONLY TAKING A COMMISSION
YOU'RE CONFUSING BROKERS AND RESELLERS HERE
NO, YOU'VE GOT IT ALL WRONG

A GOOD EXAMPLE WOULD BE A STOCK TRADER
ON THE OTHER HAND, RESELLERS BUY GOODS AND THEN SELL THEM AGAIN FOR A PROFIT. GET IT?
I'M SO CONFUSED RIGHT NOW
JUST THINK IT OVER A LITTLE AND IT'S EASY
WELL, AS LONG AS YOU DON'T FALL ASLEEP DURING LECTURE
Not that it's any skin off my back since it's not my lecture and I'm not the one whose grades'll suffer
'SCUSE ME, NEED TO GO TO THE BATHROOM
GO AHEAD
WHEW
ガチャ

I can only manage three times a night and the girl asks me to be gentle too
It's true I'm getting old

I WAS JUST FEELING A LITTLE TIRED
NAH
I JUST DON'T DRINK THAT MUCH ANYMORE HANGOVERS ARE A BITCH
DRUNK ALREADY?
UMM
YOSHI-MURA, RIGHT?
MHMM, THAT'S ME
YOU'RE INFAMOUS FOR BEING SOMA'S BOYFRIEND
HAH, REALLY?
AND ALL THE PEOPLE I USED TO KNOW'VE ALREADY GRADUATED
I'M NOT REALLY A PEOPLE PERSON IN THE FIRST PLACE...
IT'S FUNNY YOU SAY THAT, SINCE WE ALL KNOW ABOUT YOU
REALLY?

OH, NO! NOT AT ALL!
WELL, MAYBE A LITTLE
SO, LEMME GUESS
"WHAT'S A WOMAN LIKE YOSHINO SEE IN A DEADBEAT LIKE HIM"?
HAVING TO LIVE SO FAR AWAY FROM HER I MEAN
IT MUST BE HARD FOR YOU
HAHA
SHE HARDLY EVEN HAS THE TIME TO CALL ANYMORE EVEN IF I WENT WE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO DO MUCH
IT'S JUST THAT SHE'S PRETTY BUSY
I GUESS BECOMING A MEMBER OF SOCIETY'S NO JOKE
WELL, I COULD GET TO TOKYO IN TWO HOURS IF I WANTED
HMM?

WHOA, WHOA SORRY. CAN WE CHANGE THE SUBJECT?
SO HOW ABOUT THIS YEAR? ARE YOU GOING TO BE-
WELL YEAH, I GUESS
YOU HAD A JOB ALL LINED UP, RIGHT?
SO BEFORE YOU GOT HELD BACK,
NAH, DON'T BE, IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.
OH, SORRY
I JUST REALLY DON'T WANNA THINK ABOUT THAT KINDA THING RIGHT NOW
ERR
UMM THEN CAN WE TALK ABOUT YOU AND SOMA?
I MEAN, YOU DON'T HAVE TO ASK FOR MY PERMISSION OR ANYTHING

WELL, I DUNNO IT WASN'T LIKE THERE WAS ANY ONE MOMENT WHEN I KNEW IT OR ANYTHING.
SHE JUST HAD A LOT OF STUFF GOING ON IN HER LIFE BACK THEN...
I GUESS I'LL CUT TO THE CHASE, THEN HOW DID YOU GET YOSHINO TO FALL FOR YOU?
WELL, OKAY THEN
HAHA
WELL THAT WAS SUBTLE
OOOH
That's a tried and true one.
I SHOWED HER MY GOOD SIDE AND TRIED TO GET CLOSER TO HER LITTLE BY LITTLE
AND TO PUT IT SIMPLY,
IF THE TIME IS RIGHT AND THE SITUATION IS, TOO, THEN YOU JUST DO IT, YOU KNOW?
WELL... I DUNNO, PEOPLE ARE STRANGE EVEN IF YOU DON'T REALLY HAVE ANY INTENTION OF DATING,

DO IT...?
NAH I DON'T MEAN ANYTHING DIRTY BY THAT
IT'S JUST... YOU JUST UP AND START DATING ONE DAY, KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
OH YEAH I REMEMBER SHE SAID TO ME
THAT IN THE END IT WAS JUST EASIER TO DATE A GUY WHO REALLY LIKED YOU
THOUGH I DUNNO IF SHE MEANT THAT AS A GOOD THING OR A BAD THING...
HAHAHA
BLARGH
Shut up
RIGHT

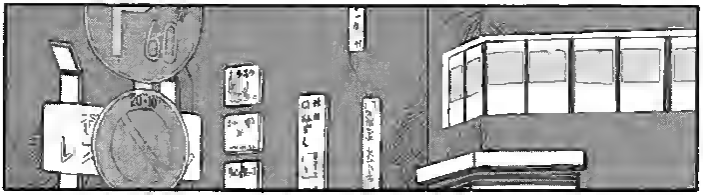
DAMMIT, DID I REALLY JUST TRY TO ACT COOL IN FRONT OF HER?
MAYBE I REALLY AM LONELY...
Calm down man
MAH, I'M FINE
Y'WANNA HAVE A DRINK?!
ばん
SHIIIIMAAA!
WHAT DO YOU WANT, HATOYAMA?
NAH, THAT WON'T DO AT ALL!
YOU'RE FINE?! FINE, HE SAYS!

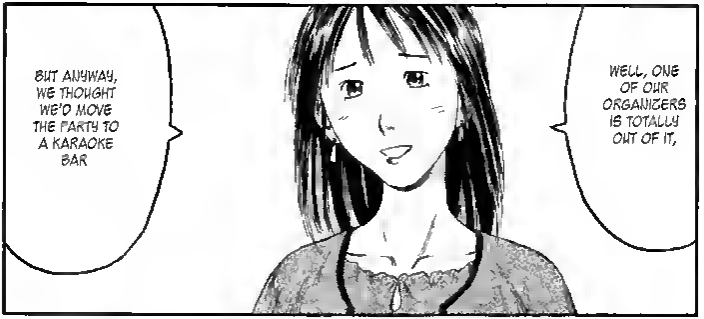
HOW WILL YOU EVER HOLD YOUR OWN AS A MEMBER OF JAPAN'S WORKFORCE IF YOU DON'T DRINK?!
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?
IT'S ALL CORPO-RATE CULTURE, DON'TCHA KNOW?
NOW YOU'RE HERE, YOU HAVE TO DRINK!
HUH?
SO
THIS PLACE IS GOING CRAZY
No you Listen
Hey
Let me finish
Listen
No way I'm telling you
MAN. NOBODY'S EVEN NOTICED HIM SHOUTING HIS HEAD OFF.
SAME AS LAST YEAR?
HOW'S THE JOB HUNT GONNA BE THIS YEAR?

Welp he said it
ARE YOU JUST GONNA GO WITH BEING A SIXTH YEAR?
OR...
ゴン
GUH

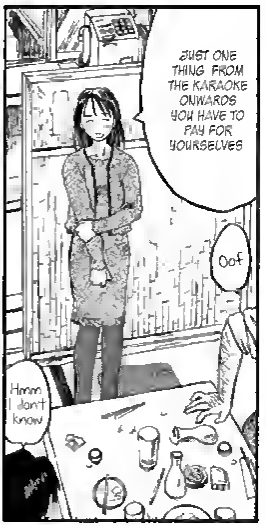
I THINK YOU'VE HAD A BIT MUCH TO DRINK, HATOYAMA
You're drunk being dramatic doesn't work
YOU LOOKING FOR A FIGHT, HATOYAMA?
NO, NO, I'M SORRY...
Onnw my teeth
BLURGH
Oop
YOU'RE RIGHT
ERR YEAH
ARE YOU ALRIGHT, HATOYAMA?
He's done
WHAT'S GOING ON?
C'mon, that's enough from you
YUP, HE'S ABOUT AT HIS LIMIT
URP
GUH

I DON'T KNOW
WONDER WHAT GOT INTO HIM
You gonna hurl? Wanna go to the bathroom?
You e supposed to be more responsible
SHADDAP. LEMME GO!
WELL, I GUESS HE'S GOT HIS...
I OWNNO...
Outta the way!
HMM
HIS OWN PROB-LEMS




WELL, ONE OF OUR ORGANIZERS IS TOTALLY OUT OF IT,
BUT ANYWAY, WE THOUGHT WE'D MOVE THE PARTY TO A KARAOKE BAR

MR SHIMA!
Yeah, Gol that Karaoke bar


JUST ONE THING FROM THE KARAOKE ONWARDS YOU HAVE TO PAY FOR YOURSELVES
Oof
Hmm I don't know

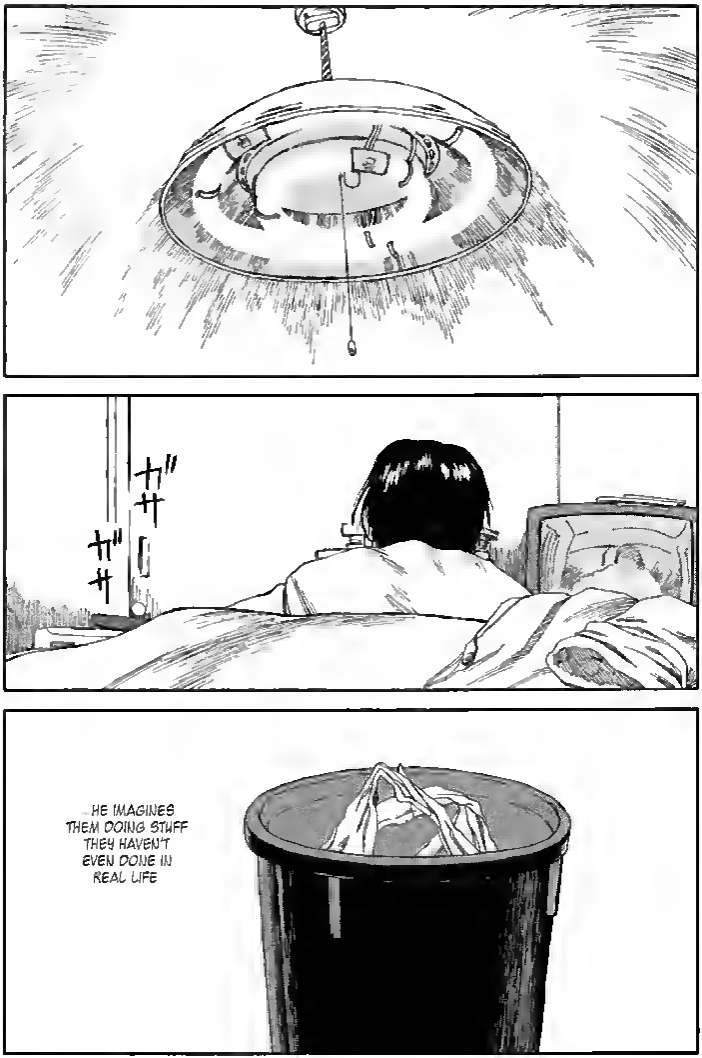
I THINK I'LL PASS
KARAOKE'S NOT MY THING, ANYWAY
WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE REST OF THE NIGHT?
COME WITH US TO THE KARAOKE BAR?
I SUPPOSE
I SEE
WELL THEN I SUPPOSE THIS IS IT FOR TONIGHT
ARE YOU GOING HOME?
HUH? OH, YEAH
ANYWAY, SEE YA!
MMM

GOOD-BYE!
I'm a little drunk...
HAVE FUN AT THE KARA-OKE!
TAKE CARE, THEN
I WILL
UGH, THIS IS WHY I DON'T LIKE DRINKING PARTIES EVERYONE GETS WAY TOO TALKATIVE
THE HELL WAS THAT ALL ABOUT...
I JUST HOPE I DON'T GET CAUGHT UP IN SOMETHING WEIRD WHILE I'M NOT LOOKING...
OKAY, LET'S GO
RIGHT

Chapter 4 - End

Chapter 5
...Without a Trace

I WONDER WHY, WHEN A GUY JERKS OFF TO A GIRL HE LIKES
MMMGH


HE IMAGINES THEM DOING STUFF THEY HAVEN'T EVEN DONE IN REAL LIFE

MAYBE IT'S 'CAUSE THE MEMORY OF THAT LAST NIGHT IS STARTING TO FADE...
...OR MAYBE NOT.
MEN ARE REALLY CREATURES
WHO HAVE TO KEEP ON SPILLING THEIR SEED, AREN'T THEY.

I work the graveyard shift at a corner store.
Phwah
Head home in the morning.
Flip through any new magazines.
Hrm
Hrm
When I get home hungry, I make do with rice balls and bread that're past the expiration date.
Now for today's forecast for Tokyo

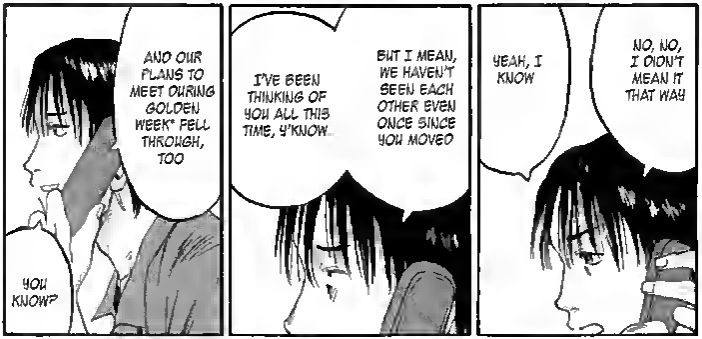
Draw the curtains.
Game a little.
Sleep.
Before I know it it's night again.

BRRING
HUH?
雷撃
KEHM
COUGH COUGH
OH.
HI, YOSHINO
YEAH, IT'S BEEN A WHILE, HASN'T IT.
HELLO?

HRM
YEAH I MEAN, I ONLY GO TO CLASS ONCE A WEEK, AND IT AIN'T LIKE I HAVE ANY FRIENDS AT WORK
HUH? OH, NAH, IT'S JUST I HAVEN'T TALKED MUCH FOR A WHILE. SOMETHING GOT IN MY THROAT
HUH? NAH... WHAT?
UH HUH UH HUH
MM?
HUH...
OH...
YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT. LAW KINDA COMES OFF AS THIS THING THAT BINDS PEOPLE,
BUT BY DOING THAT IT LETS YOU PROTECT OTHERS FROM THE THINGS YOU'RE HOLDING BACK
YEAH
AND WHEN IT COMES TO CIVILIANS, IT'S SOMETHING THEY HAVE TO LEARN TO USE
IT REALLY HIT HOME WITH YOU?
Hmm...

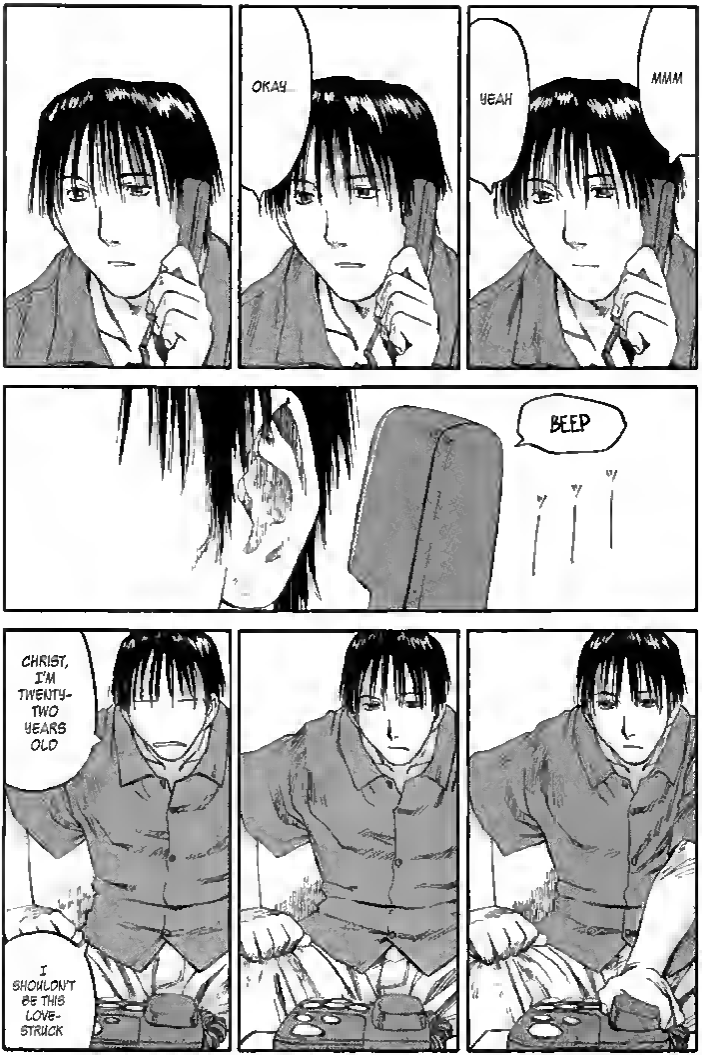
THE HELL, MY VOICE IS GOING AGAIN
It's what you wanted, right?
WELL, I'M
HUH? ME?
HMM HMM HMM
I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING, ACTUALLY
NAH, I HAD A TON OF THINGS I WANTED TO TELL YOU,
BUT IT'S ALL SO LONG AGO BY THIS POINT, IT JUST SEEMS POINTLESS TO TALK ABOUT IT

I'M STARTING TO FORGET THE SOUND OF YOUR VOICE...
YOU HAVEN'T CALLED IN LIKE A WEEK
...WELL? SAY SOME-THING...
YEAH, AND THEN HE HAD A DRINKING PARTY ON FRIDAY
JUST STUFF LIKE THE PROFESSOR CALLED ME TO CAMPUS AND TURNS OUT HE WANTED ME TO SIT IN AT SOME COURSE PLANNING SEMINAR


AND OUR PLANS TO MEET DURING GOLDEN WEEK* FELL THROUGH, TOO
YOU KNOW?
I'VE BEEN THINKING OF YOU ALL THIS TIME, Y'KNOW...
BUT I MEAN, WE HAVEN'T SEEN EACH OTHER EVEN ONCE SINCE YOU MOVED
YEAH, I KNOW
NO, NO, I DIDN'T MEAN IT THAT WAY

* A string of national holidays in late April/early May

WHAT THE HELL AM I STILL DOING HERE IN SCHOOL?
HUH?
OH, OKAY...
AHEM
SORRY, MY THROAT JUST STARTED ACTING UP AGAIN
HRRK
GACK


OKAY
YEAH
MMM
BEEP
CHRIST, I'M TWENTY-TWO YEARS OLD
I SHOULDN'T BE THIS LOVE-STRUCK

MMMGH
JUST CAN'T GIVE A SHIT ABOUT ANYTHING

ガチン
キュ〜ルルルィイ〜ン
ブウン
BWP

I'M ALWAYS UP TO PLAY SOME.
GAMES ARE REALLY GREAT
ALRIGHT, NO SLEEP TILL I BEAT THE GAME. LET'S DO THIS SHIT.
WHAT THE HELL. CAN'T GET TO SLEEP ANYWAY.

ガチャガチャ
Fuck

チャーチャチャ
チャーン
ラリラ
チャーチャ
チャラッチャ
ちゃぽんっ
WHEW
カミ
UGH
SHIT, I REALLY DIDN'T SLEEP

EH, IT'S PROBABLY A PORNO VIDEO RENTAL AD, OR MAYBE A PIZZA FLYER
HUH, WAIT, I JUST GOT SOME MAIL, DIDN'T I?
FIRST LET'S SAVE
HEH, KNEW IT
MMM...

GUESS I'LL DROP BY THE CORNER STORE OR SOMETHING
MAN, I'M HUNGRY
50
WELL, NOT LIKE I'LL FALL FOR IT
IS IT REALLY OKAY TO JUST DROP THESE OFF AT EVERY DOORSTEP?
YEESH, THEY ALWAYS HAVE REALLY HARDCORE SHIT IN THESE FLYERS
Now Im hard

Phew...
MAN, I WANNA FUCK YOSHINO
.....
.....
MAYBE I WILL GO AND BORROW A PORN VIDEO
BRIGHT AND EARLY IN THE MORNING LET'S DO IT
Well it's actually evening
YEAH, I'M BAD

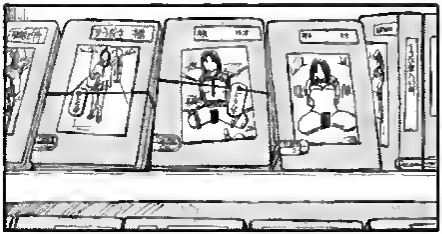
AND I GUESS IT'S CUP RAMEN AND POTATO CHIPS FOR BREAKFAST
ビデオ レンタル
1st ファースト

HMM
WHAT A SORRY STATE OF AFFAIRS
LET'S SEE, WHAT DO I DO? I DON'T WATCH PORN ALL THAT OFTEN, SO I DON'T REALLY HAVE A GOOD HANDLE ON WHAT I LIKE
I DON'T THINK I EVER REALLY ENJOYED ONE OF THEM, EITHER
BUT HONESTLY,
OR I GUESS I COULD CHOOSE BY POPULARITY, THAT'D MAKE IT UNLIKELY TO GET A REALLY BAD ONE
I GUESS I'LL START OFF CHOOSING BY THE GIRL'S LOOKS
No. 4
CHINTSU

SO I CAN'T REALLY CHOOSE BASED ON THAT. I GUESS IN THE END IT ALL DEPENDS ON THE GIRL BEING HOT OR NOT
IT'S ALL JUST WEIRD STORIES AND SUBMISSIVE GIRLS WHEN IT COMES TO THE PLOTS,
WELP, TO THE GENRE PORN SECTION IT IS, THEN
AND YOU CAN NEVER BELIEVE THE PHOTOS ON THE COVERS
I DON'T REALLY HAVE ANY FAVO-RITES
BUT THE GUY'S ALMOST ALWAYS THE SAME, AND THAT'S KINDA WEIRD
Heheh
I GUESS I'VE ENJOYED SOME OF THE ONES WHERE THEY PICK UP NORMAL GIRLS OFF THE STREET...
HMM
Not just ugly girls but some-times the scenes where they fail to pick up girls are way too long
AND THE CHANCES OF GETTING A BORING ONE ARE PRETTY HIGH

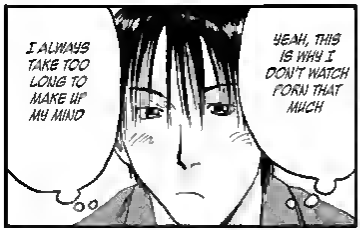
WELL, AT LEAST I WOULDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THE ACTING OR THE STORY...
I'LL KEEP TABS ON THIS SECTION FOR NOW
BUT IF I WANTED TO WATCH THAT KINDA THING, I'D BE BETTER OFF JUST GOING MYSELF
HMM
AND I DON'T WANNA WATCH ONE OF THESE AND FIND MYSELF WANTING TO GO TO ONE
HMM, PROSTITU-TION STUFF I DUNNO WHAT THAT'S ALL ABOUT
DO THEY JUST TAKE A CAMERA INTO WHORE-HOUSES OR SOMETHING?
MEH
HIGH SCHOOL-ERS
BUT ARE THEY REALLY IN HIGH SCHOOL?
MILFS
THERE'S A LOT OF BAD ONES HERE TOO
NOT MANY PRETTY WOMEN HERE FOR SOME REASON

S/M?
NAH, THAT'S REALLY NOT MY THING
Though I knew a guy in high school who liked it
LESBIANS
BUT ALMOST NONE OF THEM REALLY HAVE ONLY WOMEN
HRRM
I GUESS THE GIRLS IN GENRE PORN ARE JUST GENERALLY WORSE THAN NORMAL
NO SAFE BETS HERE
ANIME?
I'M A LITTLE CURIOUS, BUT...
HUH
I GUESS I COULD GO FOR AMATEUR STUFF...
BUT IN THE END, IT'S ALL FAKE, ISN'T IT?
It's all just voice acting



I THINK I HEARD ABOUT THIS STUFF.
THEY SAID THE CENSORSHIP WAS LIGHTER ON 'EM OR SOMETHING

MAYBE LATER
YEAH, THESE'RE A LITTLE SCARY
The covers are creepy!


I ALWAYS TAKE TOO LONG TO MAKE UP MY MIND
YEAH, THIS IS WHY I DON'T WATCH PORN THAT MUCH

MAN, I DUNNO
WHAT SHOULD I GET?

Hmm.
WONDER IF THAT MEANS I'M IMMATURE, OR ACTUALLY GETTING OLD
SOMETIMES I JUST GET ANNOYED AND LEAVE WITHOUT RENTING ANYTHING

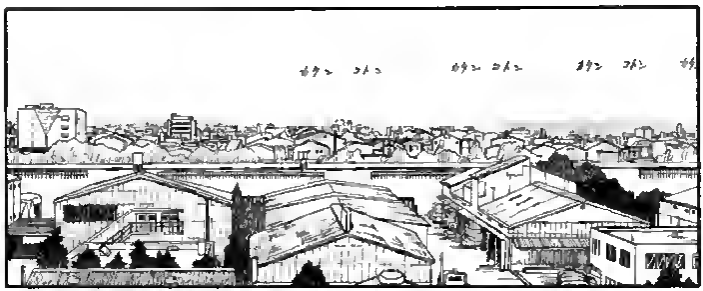
I'LL GO WITH THIS ONE WHERE THEY PICK UP GIRLS OFF THE STREET
WHATEVER, LET'S JUST PICK ONE. NO PRESSURE.

TCHK
TCHK
HELLO? HI, IT'S ME, YOSHINO.
I HAD A LITTLE FREE TIME SO I DECIDED TO GIVE YOU A CALL.
Who.
NO WAY IT'S HER

TCHK
DOO-
DOO-
DOO-
Message recorded at four, eleven, p.m
End of message
PIII
ERM, HONESTLY I DON'T REALLY HAVE MUCH TO SAY
...WELL, I HOPE YOU'RE KEEPING A HEALTHY DIET
ANYWAY, I'LL CALL AGAIN LATER. BYE!
WHAT THE FUCK, YOSHINO

GOD DAMMIT!
WHY'D YOU PICK NOW TO CALL,
I DON'T FEEL LIKE DOING ANYTHING
But I still watched the video.
JUST CAN'T GIVE A SHIT ABOUT ANYTHING

But I still jerked off to it.

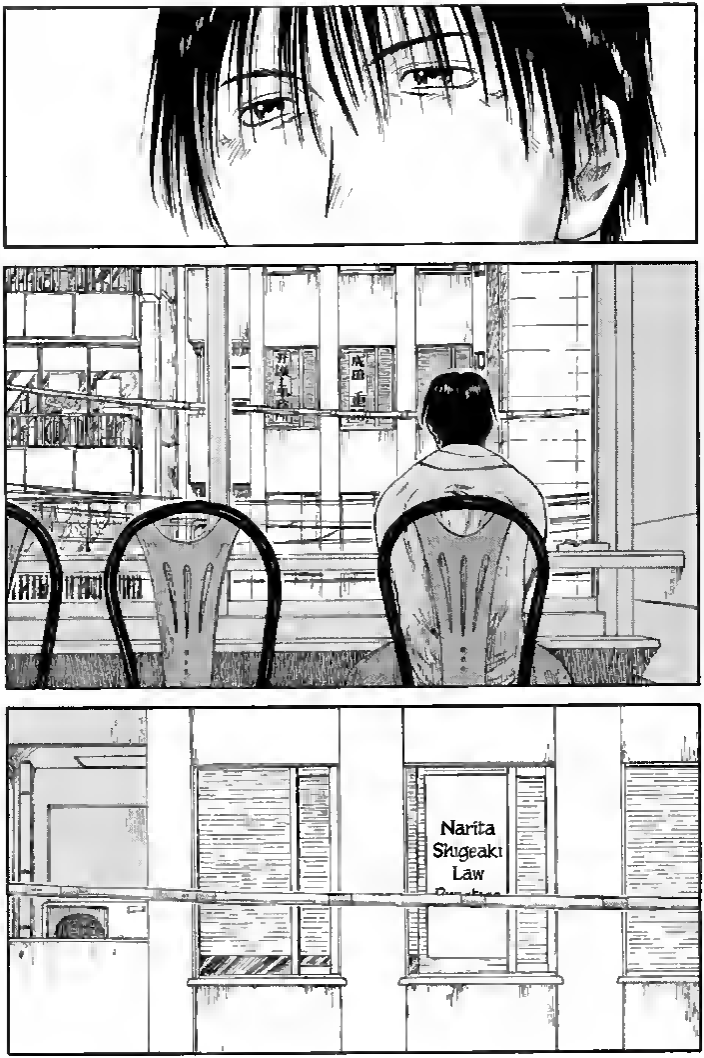


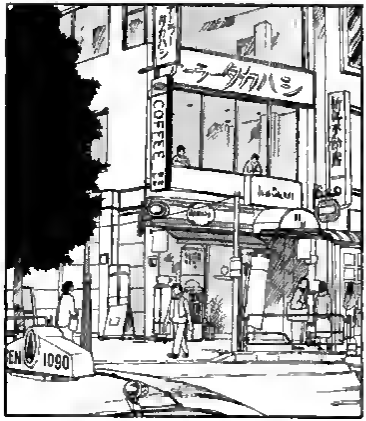
WHY THE HELL DO THEY MAKE YOU WALK SO MUCH TO GET TO THE EXIT IN TOKYO STATION FROM WHERE YOU GET OFF THE KEIYO LINE?
Y'KNOW, I ALWAYS WON-DERED...

Chapter 5 - End

Chapter 6 - Tokyo Nocturne I

What the hell am I doing here?
I HONESTLY DUNNO WHY I CAME TO TOKYO
NO, REALLY I'M NOT SAYING THAT TO LOOK COOL


Narita
Shigeaki
Law


COFFEE
EN 1090

AIN'T LIKE I CAME TO SEE HER
ERR NOT THAT I COULD EVEN IF I WANTED TO

LET'S BE REAL
EVEN IF I DID SEE HER, I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO GO UP AND TALK TO HER

YEAH, THAT'S SOMETHING YOSHINO'D DO
SHE'D GET MAD AT ME FOR JUST MOSEYING UP HERE WITHOUT TELLING HER
HEY, WHO KNOWS? SHE MIGHT EVEN BE HAPPY TO SEE ME
What am I a stalker?
STILL, IT'D BE DUMB TO COME ALL THE WAY HERE AND GO HOME WITHOUT EVEN SAYING SOMETHING TO HER
WHAT DO YOU WANNA DO? WHAT'D SATISFY YOU?
CALM DOWN, AKIO THINK

I WANNA TAKE HER TO A HOTEL AND FUCK HER TILL SHE CAN'T WALK STRAIGHT
OF COURSE, IF WE'RE BEING HONEST HERE ABOUT WHAT I REALLY WANT,
THAT AIN'T HAPPENING
BUT HONESTLY?
YEAH, SHE'D THINK I'M A WEIRDO
THAT'D BE FINE IN MY BOOK
I GUESS IF I COULD BRING HER TO A CAFE LIKE THIS AND WE COULD JUST TALK,

AND SHE ASKED ME TO NOT EVEN CALL HER CELL WHEN SHE'S AT WORK UNLESS IT'S SOMETHING IMPORTANT
IF SHE'S AS BUSY AS SHE SAYS, SHE WON'T BE OFF WORK TILL TEN AT THE EARLIEST
AND THEN USE THE PHONE HERE TO GIVE HER A CALL.
Is it in the corner?
MAYBE I CAN SAY SOMETHING LIKE "HEY SO I JUST HAPPENED TO BE IN TOKYO"
IN THAT CASE, I CAN WAIT OUT HERE TILL SHE COMES OUT...
WAIT, HOLD IT!
AND YOSHINO DOESN'T WATCH MOVIES, SO IF I JUST SAY IT WASN'T THAT GREAT SHE'LL LET IT DROP WITHOUT ASKING TOO MANY QUESTIONS...
I SHOULD GRAB A MOVIE MAGAZINE AND STUDY UP A LITTLE AHEAD OF TIME
YEAH, THAT WORKS MAKES SENSE I'D BE OUT HERE LATE IN THAT CASE
I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING WITH ME SO SHOPPING'S OUT
SO WHY DID I COME HERE? SHOPPING? TO WATCH A MOVIE?
YEAH LET'S GO WITH THE MOVIE SAY I WANTED TO CATCH A LATE SHOWING OF SOMETHING THAT ONLY OPENS IN TOKYO

THIS MIGHT ACTUALLY WORK!
YEAH!
I JUST HOPE YOSHINO DOESN'T LEAVE WHILE I'M GONE...
ALRIGHT I SHOULD ZIP OVER TO A CORNER STORE OR BOOKSTORE TO GET THAT MAGAZINE
THIS AIN'T GONNA WORK.
...WHAT'M I THINKING?
COME TO THINK OF IT, SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPENED A WHILE AGO, DIDN'T IT...
The porno thing
I CAN'T GIVE A FUCK ANY-MORE

I GUESS...
MAKE SURE SHE'S REALLY WORKING LATE LIKE SHE SAID, AND THEN GO HOME
I'LL JUST SPOT YOSHINO FROM HERE AND SEE WHAT HER NEW HAIR-STYLE'S LIKE,
HEH, I'M DUMB
Man I'm hungry
I GUESS I'M THE TYPE WHO'S FINE WITH WASTING TIME AND EFFORT AS LONG AS NOBODY FINDS OUT AND I CONVINCE MYSELF IT WAS WORTH IT

Ugh
ずず

Hrrm hrrm
PHWAAH
CASHE

YOSHINO?

IT'S ONLY SIX!
WAIT, HOLD UP! AIN'T THIS A LITTLE EARLY?!

HUH?
MAYBE SHE'S JUST POPPING OUT FOR DINNER?
I REALLY WASN'T EXPECTING THIS...
I...
IF THIS WAS A ROMCOM I'D RUN UP TO HIM AND BEAT HIM UP AND THEN IT'D TURN OUT IT WAS ALL A HUGE MISUNDERSTANDING, RIGHT? AND THEN IT'D GO "WHOOPS I'M SORRY" AND WE'D ALL LAUGH
AND THEN YOSHINO'D REALIZE WHAT I WAS GOING THROUGH AND BE HAPPY THAT I CARED SO MUCH FOR HER, RIGHT?
HOLY SHIT!
THIS IS LIKE A SOAP OPERA OR SOMETHING!
THIS KINDA SHIT REALLY HAPPENS?
COFFEE

I HAVE TO FOLLOW 'EM AND SEE.
Ergh.
WELL, EITHER WAY

TO BE HONEST, I DON'T THINK SHE'S CHEATING ON ME
SHE PROBABLY JUST FINISHED WORK EARLY TODAY AND WANTS TO GRAB A BITE WITH A COWORKER
STILL...
THAT GUY PISSES ME OFF
HE'S GOT TO BE GOING FOR YOSHINO I KNOW IT
It's obvious.

MAYBE I SHOULD KICK HIM
SHOUT "HANDS OFF MY WOMAN ASSHOLE!" OR SOMETHING
Hcheh
BUT THAT'D GET YOSHINO IN TROUBLE AT WORK WOULDN'T IT
MEH IT'D SERVE HER RIGHT FOR JUST FOLLOWING A GUY LIKE THAT WITHOUT THINKING ABOUT ME
Hehehch
THEY RE HEADING FOR A BAR
THAT MEANS THEY'RE NOT GOING BACK TO WORK FOR TONIGHT
Argh

...OKAY, NOW I'M PISSED

GIMME ANOTHER BEER HERE!!
A BEER
AND SOME GRILLED CHICKEN SKINS
COMIN' RIGHT UP
.....
.....

I KNOW SOME WINES THAT'RE POPULAR THESE DAYS
MAYBE YOU SHOULD TRY OUT SOME OTHER TYPES OF LIQUOR.
OH, REALLY?
I don't care...
DO YOU LIKE TO DRINK?
NO, MY HEAD STARTS ACHING IF I DRINK TOO MUCH
I HEAR BEER CAN CAUSE HEADACHES AS YOUR BODY PROCESSES IT
MAYBE IT'S JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE DRINKING BEER?
Though there was that one time I drank a bottle of cheap wine back in college and blacked out

SO, ABOUT THE BAR EXAM
HMM? OH, RIGHT
WHAT IS IT?
WHAT DID YOU THINK OF IT, MR KURAHASHI?
I KEEP HEARING THAT IT'S SO HARD, BUT NOTHING MUCH BESIDES
THINK OF IT?
HMM
WELL, THEY'RE NOT WRONG IT IS QUITE DIFFICULT
IT ISN'T THE SORT OF EXAM YOU CAN PASS WITHOUT STUDYING AT LEAST A LITTLE
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULD LET IT INTIMIDATE YOU
THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE WHO GO INTO IT THINKING THEY'LL ONLY GO FOR THE FIRST TEST*, BUT THAT HARDLY EVER WORKS OUT
IT'LL BE TOUGH, BUT YOU SHOULD TAKE THE FIRST TEST EXPECTING THE LONG HAUL

* At the time of this publication, the full Japanese bar exam started in January and ended in October, though individuals who graduated from university with a degree in law were exempt from the preliminary January test. The first proper test was held in May, people who passed this multiple choice exam then took a series of essays in July, and finally an oral examination in October

Haha...
haha
What is he trying to say?
WITH A LITTLE LUCK ON YOUR SIDE, OF COURSE
BUT IF YOU REALLY KEEP YOUR NOSE TO THE GRINDSTONE AND STUDY HARD, IT MIGHT NOT EVEN TAKE THAT LONG TO PASS
ISN'T THAT PRETTY FAST?
HMM...
IT TOOK ME THREE YEARS
FOR REFERENCE,
NO REALLY! JUST DO IT
OH, I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT
BUT THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO PASS IN ONE GO NOT MANY, OF COURSE, BUT THEY EXIST
FASTER THAN AVERAGE, YES
RIGHT
NOTHING'S IMPOSSIBLE!
Hahaha
HAHAHA
What?
I THINK YOU MIGHT'VE GONE FARTHER THAN YOU EXPECTED
MS. SOMA, I THINK YOU COULD HAVE GIVEN IT A TRY WHILE YOU WERE STILL IN SCHOOL.

COME TO THINK OF IT, DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE BOSS TOLD ME?
HE SAID YOU HAD GOOD INSTINCTS
INSTINCTS...?
MHMM
HE SAID THAT INSTINCTS WERE REALLY IMPORTANT FOR LAWYERS
FOR EXPERTS, MAYBE
I THINK I STILL NEED TO WORK ON MEMORIZING AND APPLYING LAWS FIRST
STILL, U KNOW WHAT THEY ALWAYS TELL ME?
"YOU'VE GOT BAD INSTINCTS" THAT'S EVEN WORSE THAN NOT HAVING ANY AT ALL!"
I GUESS THE BIG PROBLEM IS TIME
RIGHT NOW YOU'RE SO BUSY WITH WORK YOU DON'T HAVE ANY TIME LEFT OVER TO STUDY, RIGHT?
RIGHT
He wasn't this forward at work
I LIKE TO THINK I ADJUST QUICKLY
I'M GETING IN STUDYING WHEN I CAN MANAGE
What are you my friend now?

I DID IT FOR ABOUT TWO YEARS ALL TOLD,
SO NOT THAT LONG,
BUT I THINK I DID ALRIGHT
WELL,
I TOOK MOCK TESTS AT CRAM SCHOOLS, AND ALSO ASKED MY PROFESSORS FOR TIPS AND HELP ON PREPARING FOR THE MULTIPLE CHOICE ESSAY, AND ORAL EXAMS
AND I STUDIED A BIT IN COLLEGE, TOO
HMM?
STILL.
IF YOU'VE STUDIED THAT MUCH, WHY NOT GIVE IT A SHOT THIS YEAR?
EVEN BACK IN MY DAY WE DIDN'T HAVE BOOK-WORMS LIKE YOU!
WOW
UMM, RIGHT...
Rude
I CAN SEE IN MY MIND'S EYE HOW YOUR PEERS MUST HAVE SEEN YOU.
HUH?

Hmm
That's it?
BEFORE THIS I HADN'T EVEN HAD A PART-TIME JOB
I WANTED SOME REAL WORLD EXPERIENCE
I REALIZE I JUST TOOK THE JOB WITHOUT CONSIDERING WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF I PASSED THE BAR EXAM
IF YOU MAKE IT NEXT YEAR YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE THE MANDATORY TWO YEARS OF TRAINING, AFTER ALL
IN THAT CASE I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED TO SEE YOU LEAVE US BEFORE LONG
A REAL SHAME
NO, NO, NO
IT'S JUST A SHAME
I'M SORRY

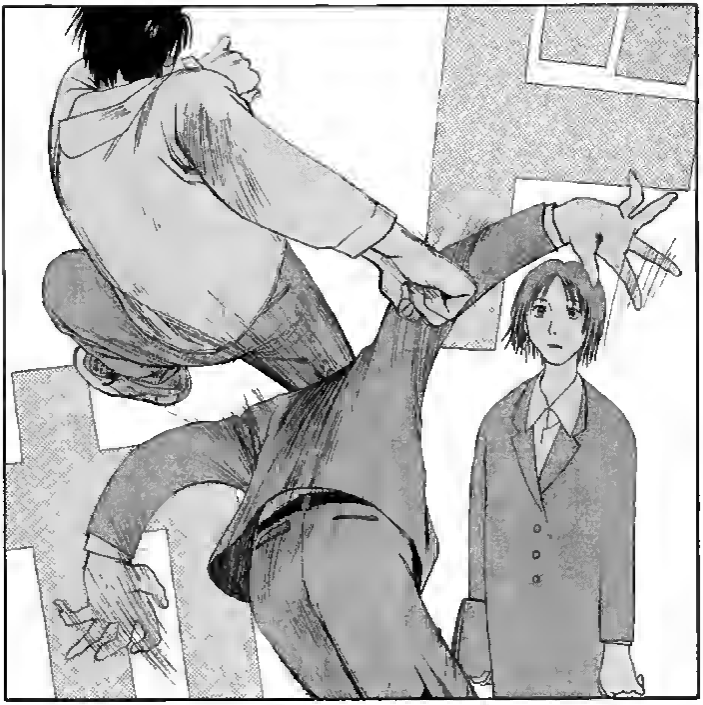
I DID
YOU KNOW, WITH ALL THAT STUDYING, I HAVE TO IMAGINE THAT YOU DIDN'T HAVE TIME FOR A BOYFRIE-
I HAVE A BOY-FRIEND
WHAT?
OH... REALLY, NOW
WE'VE BEEN DATING FOR ABOUT TWO YEARS
WE MET IN COLLEGE

Haha.. and here I was thinking of asking you out
Hahaha..
Nice try better luck next time.
NO IT'S NOTHING
IS SOMETHING WRONG?
HMM?
WELL ..
SO WHAT KIND OF PERSON IS HE?
TO PUT IT SIMPLY, HE'S AN IDIOT.

NO,
I KNOW THAT MUCH
SHE SEES ME OUT THE DOOR EVERY MORNING
BUT STILL...
OH, I GET IT I THINK I SAW IT ON TV
IT'S LIKE...
WHEN THEY SAY, "KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!" THEY MEAN WELL.
BUT IT'S REALLY A LOT OF PRESSURE FOR THE PERSON WHO'S HEARING IT
RIGHT...
SO HOW ABOUT TAKING A DAY OFF?
I THOUGHT THAT TOO. THAT'S WHY I LEFT WORK EARLY TODAY
HMM?
AND... HOW SHOULD I PUT IT?
I REALIZED THAT EVEN AT THE AGE OF FIFTY A WOMAN IS STILL A WOMAN
...
I felt my neck hair
The butcher's car is
...

.....
.....
<Slam>
!
I THINK I GOTTA GO
GOTCHA
Alright! That's 3000
That's 2460 yen

ANYWAY, WE SHOULD GET GOING TO THE STATION
RIGHT
Hey your change!
I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO HELPING YOU WITH MORE THINGS FROM NOW ON
NO, NO, IT'S FINE!
THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR TIME
I KNOW YOU MUST HAVE BEEN HOPING TO LEAVE EARLY TODAY
AH.



Chapter 6 - End

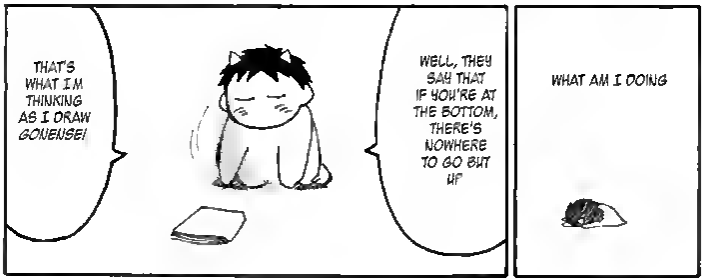
EMBARRASSING AFTERWORD 3

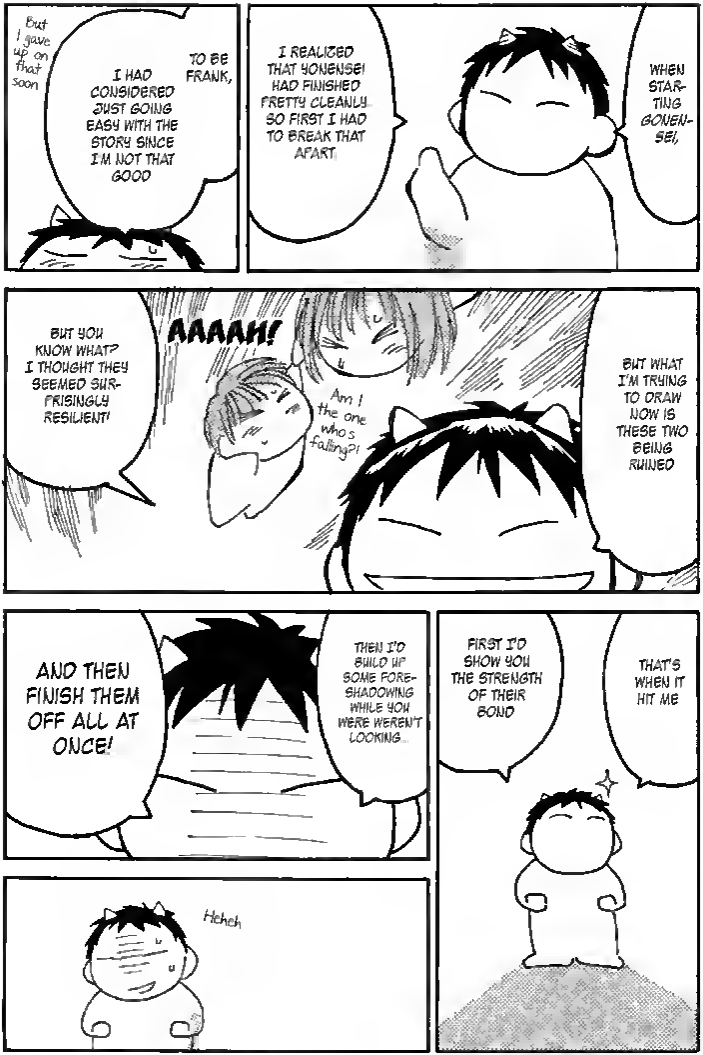
IT'S MY THIRD EVER PUBLISHED VOLUME NUMBER ONE IN THIS NEW SERIES!
It's a sequel but still
Gokensei Volume 1
WHEW, THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR BUYING THIS BOOK!
I GUESS I'VE GOTTEN USED TO IT
HMMM
WHAT'S THAT? AM I NOT EMBARRASSED THIS TIME?
HMM?
NO!
I CAN'T GET ACCUSTOMED TO THIS!
BUT I GUESS THAT'S JUST SOMETHING THAT'S PART OF ME NOW
SO SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY I THINK I GOT USED TO IT
I MEAN, I STILL CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO READ MY OWN MANGA

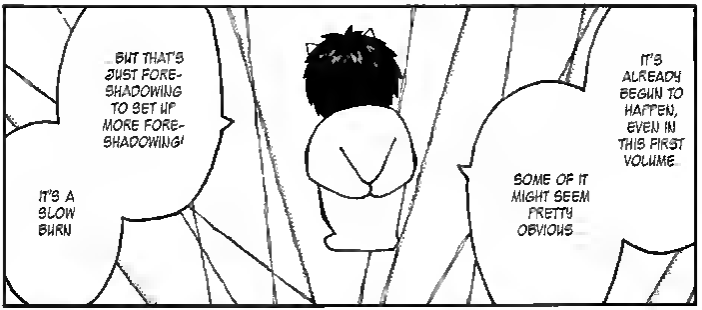
IF I KEEP THIS UP THEN SOON I'LL JUST BE GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS!
LOOK AT WHAT YOU'RE DOING!!
THERE CAN BE NO GROWTH WITHOUT HARDSHIP!

I GOT MAYBE FIVE PAGES IN (REALLY.)

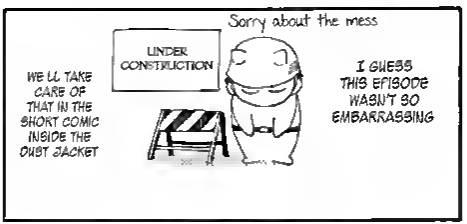
MY EDITOR ALWAYS TRIES TO GET ME TO STOP BEING SO HARD ON MYSELF IN THESE AFTERWORDS
Though half of it is on purpose.
YOU KNOW,
I CAN'T STAY A CHILD FOREVER
I'M TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OLD


THAT'S WHAT I'M THINKING AS I DRAW GOMENSE!
WELL, THEY SAY THAT IF YOU'RE AT THE BOTTOM, THERE'S NOWHERE TO GO BUT UP
WHAT AM I DOING


But I gave up on that soon
TO BE FRANK,
I HAD CONSIDERED JUST GOING EASY WITH THE STORY SINCE I'M NOT THAT GOOD
I REALIZED THAT YONENSEI HAD FINISHED PRETTY CLEANLY SO FIRST I HAD TO BREAK THAT APART
WHEN STARTING GONENSEI,
AAAAH!
Am I the one who's failing?!
BUT YOU KNOW WHAT? I THOUGHT THEY SEEMED SURPRISINGLY RESILIENT!
BUT WHAT I'M TRYING TO DRAW NOW IS THESE TWO BEING RUINED
AND THEN FINISH THEM OFF ALL AT ONCE!
THEN I'D BUILD UP SOME FORESHADOWING WHILE YOU WERE WEREN'T LOOKING...
FIRST I'D SHOW YOU THE STRENGTH OF THEIR BOND
THAT'S WHEN IT HIT ME
Hehehe


BUT THAT'S JUST FORE-SHADOWING TO SET UP MORE FORE-SHADOWING!
IT'S A SLOW BURN
IT'S ALREADY BEGUN TO HAPPEN, EVEN IN THIS FIRST VOLUME
SOME OF IT MIGHT SEEM PRETTY OBVIOUS

AND I GUESS I'M MAKING SOME EXCUSES BECAUSE THE PLOT'S BEEN MOVING SLOWER THAN I FIRST INTENDED
I'm looking forward to it too
And after that maybe even more new horizons stretching onward...
THAT'S WHAT I'M GOING FOR.
Probably


Sorry about the mess
UNDER CONSTRUCTION
The scary stuff's still to come!
WE'LL TAKE CARE OF THAT IN THE SHORT COMIC INSIDE THE DUST JACKET
I GUESS THIS EPISODE WASN'T SO EMBARRASSING

Gonensei 1 - End